Appalachia as a Playground for the Privileged by Elizabeth Sims

NOW & THEN

THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

CENTER FOR APPALACHIAN STUDIES AND SERVICES • EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

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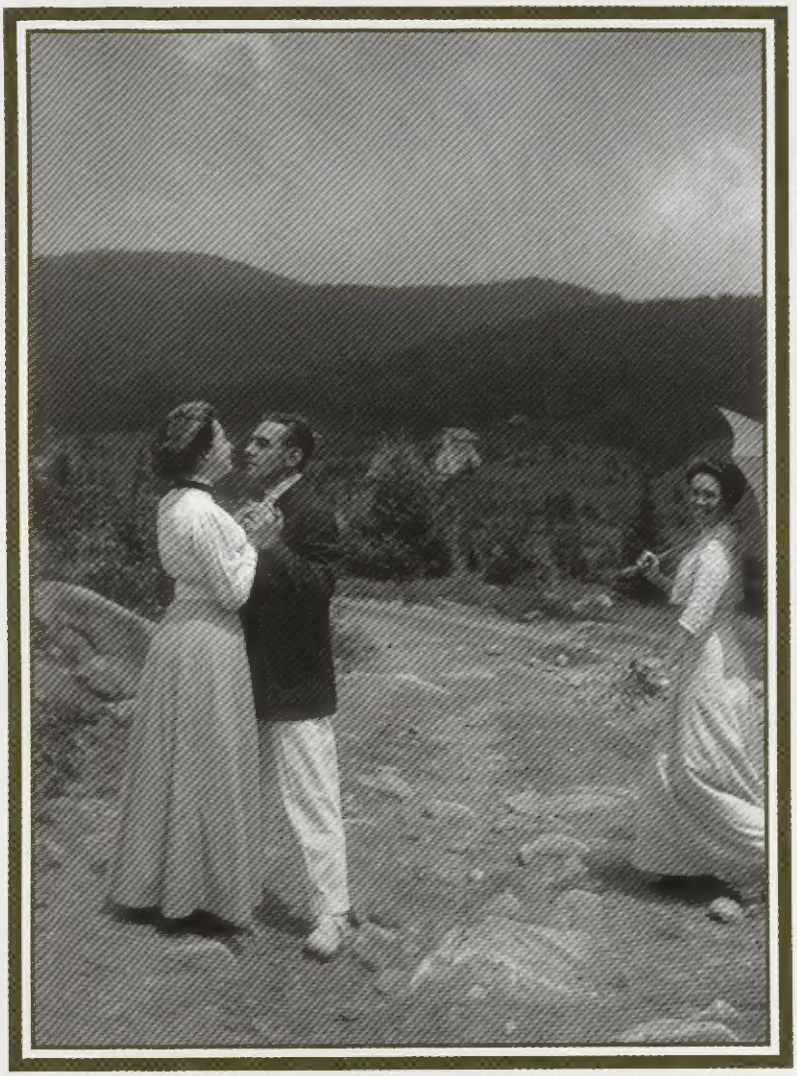

URBANE APPALACHIA

NOW & THEN
THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

With this issue we are introduced to many remarkable Appalachians, including Mrs. Nane Dimmette Spainhour *(see page two)*.

NOW: *Contemporary photograph of Mrs. Spainhour, 2008.*

THEN: *An oil painting of young Nane by Roberta Beall Gwyn, circa 1935-36.*

On the cover: *From the Hugh L. White collection, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University.*

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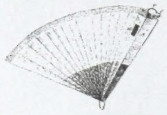

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NOW & THEN
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By August 31, 2008

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By March 31, 2009

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THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

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AFFIRMING URBANITY IN APPALACHIA

By ROBERTA HERRIN

CENTER FOR APPALACHIAN STUDIES AND SERVICES
DIRECTOR

The theme for this issue, urbane Appalachia, was suggested by Gwen Wallace, a native of Johnson City, Tennessee. Actually, she suggested "cosmopolitan" Appalachia, but we opted for the word "urbane." Some would argue that either word combined with "Appalachia" creates an oxymoron. We think otherwise. So in this issue, we listen to what people say about an overlooked characteristic of the region: urbanity. One person passionate about the topic is Mrs. Nane Dimmette Spainhour, who grew up in Lenoir, North Carolina, and lived in Boone for forty years. She now resides in Kingsport, Tennessee, where I visited her home to retrieve a collection of Lamar Stringfield materials she donated to the Reece Museum and the Archives of Appalachia at ETSU.

Stringfield was a flutist and Pulitzer Prize winner who grew up in Mars Hill, North Carolina. In his classical compositions and musical scores for outdoor dramas, such as playwright Paul Green's *Wilderness Road*, he borrowed motifs and themes from traditional mountain music. Mrs. Spainhour's sister, Laudie Dimmette Porter, studied flute with Stringfield in Charlotte, North Carolina, and regarded him highly as her teacher and mentor. The Dimmette family regularly enjoyed the company of musicians and artists in their home. (Percy Grainger dined in Nane's home when she was around twelve.) Nane's grandmother played the mountain dulcimer and taught her son to love music, so he saw to it that all his children had musical training. On Saturdays, he took a four-year-old Nane and her sister Dulcie to Salem College in Old Salem, North Carolina, for violin and harp lessons. Nane's interest in and exposure to artists and musicians grew after her marriage to David Spainhour, who had also studied the violin.

The violin did not "take" with Nane or David, but living among artists and musicians, she observed the urbane qualities of mountain culture. Unfortunately, "People avoid writing about it when they write about the mountains." The region does not lack for examples of sophistication, urbanity, and all that these words imply, including education, but writers avoid the examples. A case in point is Cynthia Rylant's *Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds,* which implies that the region lacks educational institutions, even today. Rylant says that Appalachians have to "go off" to "find some way to become doctors or teachers." Mrs. Spainhour, on the other hand, points to institutions such as Tusculum College, founded in 1794 in Greeneville, Tennessee, the twenty-eighth oldest college in the nation. The life of Kingsport attorney William Harrison Bowlin (1874–1956) is also proof that people do not have to leave Appalachia

to become educated. Born on the North Fork of the Holston River in Fido, Virginia, he attended Beech Grove, a one-room mountain school; Kingsley Seminar in Bloomingdale, Tennessee; Shoemaker College in Gate City, Virginia; Emory and Henry College in Emory, Virginia; and in 1902 earned a law degree from U. S. Grant University in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Another writer who was blind to the urbanity of the region is Sir Arnold Toynbee. Mrs. Spainhour wishes that somebody would "tell him to go. . . ." If he had ever visited among Appalachian families, he could not have advanced the notion that the upright Scots regressed when they settled in the region. Her life is testimony that regression is not a characteristic of the region. "Mountain people are not dumb," she says. "They have to be able to take care of any situation." While her family had little in common with the Snuffy Smith icon, they were not privileged, either: "We had a garden, canned, cooked, washed our own clothes, and entertained. We were not waited on, hand and foot, though some in our community were. It's not good for people to be waited on, anyway." She believes that "intelligence comes from the use of your hands." That is why she insisted that all her children learn to weave.

Nane Spainhour would not apply the word "cosmopolitan" to Appalachians because it "denotes that anything is accepted." Mountain people are "hardheaded," have values, and do not easily conform. "Urbane" is a better descriptor. Though urbane people are not necessarily moneyed, they do have standards and "know the right things to do"—how to treat others and look people in the eye. Looking life straight in the eye, figuratively or metaphorically, may be a universal characteristic of urbanity—in art, in music, and in people, whether they live in the Midwest or Appalachia. Nane Spainhour can claim that characteristic, and so can Gwen Wallace—two native Appalachian women. ❖

IN MEMORIAM

We dedicate this issue of *Now & Then* to the memory of Ambrose Manning. A native of Nash County, North Carolina, and professor emeritus in the English Department at East Tennessee State University, Ambrose was the quintessential gentleman.

It is fitting that this husband, father, veteran, and scholar-friend to Southern Appalachia and her people should be recognized in an issue with the theme "urbane." ❖

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

By FRED SAUCEMAN

This issue of *Now & Then* explores the urbane side of Appalachia, a region where symphony orchestra performances draw larger percentages of the population to concerts than similar events in New York City.

Visiting large and small cities in Appalachia, Lori Tucker-Sullivan finds out why independent bookstores are making a resurgence here. We send writer Miriam Rubin to explore the ethnic enclaves of Pittsburgh, to ask if the citizens of that city perceive it as part of Appalachia.

While Appalachia has been a place of abject poverty, its resorts have been playgrounds for the privileged. Elizabeth Sims examines life in the region from the perspective of the rich—through the windows of the Greenbrier in West Virginia; from the vineyards of the Biltmore, the Vanderbilt family's French chateau in North Carolina; inside the Great Hall of Asheville's Grove Park Inn; and on the walking trails of Tennessee's Blackberry Farm, in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains.

In downtown Chattanooga, we see how the legacy of the juke joint now powers cultural tourism, and we drop down to Birmingham, where chef Frank Stitt re-examines grits at the Highlands Bar and Grill.

Michael Joslin reflects on the life of the man who saved North Carolina's Grandfather Mountain, and Rachel Bliss introduces us to people calling themselves Cicada and SoAmI, inhabitants of intentional communities in Appalachia.

The year 2008 marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the publication of John Fox, Jr.'s novel *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*. In re-evaluating Fox's work, Tamara Baxter considers how that book has shaped perceptions about Appalachia, good and bad, since it was first introduced in 1908.

We hope this issue of *Now & Then* shapes perceptions as well and that readers who may be only vaguely familiar with our rich, varied, and complex region come to see no tension between the words "urbane" and "Appalachia." ❖

RECKONING

"In these days one may see a great many queer sights in Tennessee. He may discern the print of the deer-skin moccasin and the French kid slipper side by side. Overlooking the mud-chinked cabin of the pioneer, carefully imitated from the handiwork of Daniel Boone, he may see the elegant villa from the design by Downing or Vaux. Strangely contrasting with the simple garb and manner of the olden time, he meets every where the luxury and polish of modern refinement."

David Hunter Strother
(writing under the pseudonym of Porte Crayon)
"Winter in the South"
Published in 1858

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES OFFER ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLE

By RACHAEL ROBERTS BLISS

Is there an alternative to life in a subdivision, daily bouts with the morning and evening commute traffic, or fast-food heartburn? Some folks in Appalachia and throughout the world have found such an alternative. They are members of intentional communities.

The Fellowship of Intentional Communities describes an intentional community as a group of people who have chosen to live together with a common purpose, working cooperatively to create a lifestyle that reflects their shared core values. The people may live on a piece of rural land, in an urban neighborhood, or they may share a single residence or a cluster of dwellings.

Although there are many types of communities, egalitarian ones are the most counter-cultural and often get most of the publicity. Many of these were started in the 1960s and '70s and revolve around peace, ecology, and feminist values.

Egalitarian community members agree to share income and community resources, to cooperate in work, to abide by decisions made by consensus, and to practice non-violence. One such community is Twin Oaks near Louisa, Virginia, between Charlottesville and Richmond. This forty-year-old community just outside the Appalachian region has nearly one hundred members, some of whom have remained there for more than

The Pond Cabin is a basic gain passive solar structure. Photo courtesy Long Branch Environmental Education Center.

thirty years. The Annual Intentional Communities Conference has been held there in recent years.

This conference in past years was hosted by The Farm, another older community begun in 1970 by 320 hippies in Tennessee's Lewis County. The Farm started out strictly as a religious egalitarian community. However, in the mid-1980s, the community's three-square-mile farm became a foundation, whereby each member is responsible for self-support and pays membership dues. The majority of intentional communities aren't egalitarian. Others may be organized in one of several ways:

- Co-housing: Communities that generally incorporate both private homes and shared common facilities while supporting neighborly connections.
- Co-ops: Cooperative, generally expense sharing, often urban, shared housing communities. (Many of those listed are focused on college students.)
- Religious Communities: Generally communities which are organized primarily around religious values and/or activities. (Some of these may share many of the same practices that egalitarian communities espouse.)
- Ecovillages: Communities whose members generally commit to living sustainably, reintegrating their lives with ecology.

The communities in Appalachia that were surveyed represent hybrid versions of the varying types of collectives. Almost all have formed at least some type of community land trust (CLT) to protect their swath of land (up to ninety-nine years in many cases) from future development outside the current intentions of the communities. CLTs usually retain rights to buy buildings from residents who move out of the community.

In North Carolina, Long Branch Environmental Center was begun in 1974 as a 1,635-acre land trust and ecological sanctuary outside Leicester. It now calls itself a non-profit education center with the goal of developing strategies that will help people become more self-reliant. Paul Gallimore is the heart, soul, and pocketbook for Long Branch, although he claims to have ten residents there in nine residential units. Long Branch operates on three objectives: conservation, research, and education.

The majority of intentional communities aren't egalitarian.

Gallimore sells raspberries in the summer months. Visitors are free to check out the Education Center's greenhouses, solar energy-friendly houses, compost toilets, its hydro-power generator, an American chestnut nursery, and other eco-friendly points of interest. Although the center claims to be organic, the visitor may see containers with skulls and crossbones on the labels, indicating that poisons are used somewhere at the center. Gallimore markets his book, entitled *Healing Appalachia: Sustainable Living through Appropriate Technology*, for thirty-five dollars.

The word around that part of North Carolina is that Gallimore has been fighting with local governmental agencies to make Long Branch exempt from property taxation. "I'm still working on that," he notes, as he explains why his center needs donations.

Zim Zam, in contrast, sits on one acre of land in urban Asheville, North Carolina, and is organized more as a housing co-op.

Speaking on behalf of residents' simple arrangement, member Cicada explains how Zim Zam originated. "Two members decided to find others who shared their values with whom to create community. Eventually after a couple years of renting, a house and

an acre of land were purchased. We are still technically in a formation stage, even though it has been about ten years since we started creating Zim Zam."

Cicada says that the purpose of Zim Zam is to help its members (three at that time with a baby on the way) support one another on their respective life paths.

"We also want to help the people of the world to become more peaceful and loving with one another, through being an example and through education and activism," he states. "Lastly, our purpose is to live and demonstrate a model of transforming ourselves to a sustainable relationship with earth ecosystems."

Zim Zam and Long Branch are among more than a dozen intentional communities in and around Asheville. Two other communities of note were the 1,000-acre Celo community near Burnsville and the 320-acre Earthaven Ecovillage, begun in 1994, near Black Mountain (and under quarantine from a hepatitis outbreak last year).

Celo has around seventy members and is classified as a land trust. One member bragged that Celo is the second oldest non-religious community in the country, and if you're over fifty, don't even think of getting on the waiting list.

Neither community is egalitarian, and both usually require an initiation fee along with regular membership fees.

On the western edge of Appalachia, not far from the tiny town of Liberty, Tennessee, is the 200-acre Pumpkin Hollow. It is officially listed as a housing cooperative.

The first residents of Pumpkin Hollow Community moved onto this rustic and remote land corporation in late November of 1996. By 1998, they incorporated as a mutual benefit, nonprofit corporation. In 2001, they assumed responsibility for the mortgage and deed on the land. Partners in the nonprofit corporation are the legal stewards of the land, scheduled to be entirely paid off within ten years. Until then, everyone on the land participates in the financial obligation to pursue communal ownership.

The charter statement declares, "The specific purpose of this corporation is to maintain a rural, residential community for the practice of sustainable agriculture, ecological living, art, and education."

Over the years, that mission statement has been expanded to include radical activism, practicing earth-based spirituality, and throwing transformative, "carnivalesque" festivals.

Notable about Pumpkin Hollow was that it is an integral part of "The Fifth Estate" anarchist publication.

"The best rule about anarchy is that there are no rules," Change remarked regarding his feeling about Pumpkin Hollow and its association with anarchy. (A common practice in communities is for members to use alias names.)

Pumpkin Hollow claims that the first residents chose this region for the wild (and relatively affordable) land in proximity to an already established, extended "neighborhood" of intentional communities.

Not far from Pumpkin Hollow lies Short Mountain Sanctuary, a 200-acre community-controlled land trust " . . . providing safe space for queer folk of diverse descriptions."

Spokespeople from Short Mountain describe their community as one in which members strive to live lightly on the land and to maintain an environment which is open, free, and stimulating to each person's growth and creativity. They are anti-authoritarian and make decisions by consensus at their weekly family meetings.

Two other intentional communities live on neighboring plots of land. They are the IDA community, an arts collective, and Agape, a Russian Orthodox community.

On the eastern state line of Tennessee not far from Cosby is Nippur, a name taken from an ancient Babylonian city. This small plot of land (less than twenty acres) is owned by a Lexington, Kentucky, attorney. He puts on a new persona periodically at this getaway community. Membership seems to be fluid, changing from year to year. Although at one time six or seven people lived there, today there is only one person permanently.

"I got a job in Asheville, and it was just too much of a drive for us who have jobs," one former resident noted. "So now many of us just come here for a weekend or a special event."

He notes that Nippur is a sister community to nearby Avalon, modeled on ancient Celtic mysticism, with claims that the leader's bloodline reaches back some 1,000 years into British and French history.

Somewhat on the tamer side is Elderspirit Community in Abingdon, Virginia. As the name suggests, this community is for people fifty-five and older. They seek the values of spirituality (of whatever path), mutual support and service, pursuit of artistic activities, a simple lifestyle, respect for the earth, and care for their health.

Ironically, Elderspirit is one of the newer communities. Residents live in co-housing, either in small, privately-owned townhouses or apartments with rent based on the occupants' income. Elderspirit isn't egalitarian, and residents judge for themselves how much they can offer in labor and service to the community. Decisions are made by consensus.

A big attraction for many residents of Elderspirit is the fact that it is situated up a small hill near the thirty-mile-long Virginia Creeper Trail. After just a couple of years in operation, the community continues to deal with a large waiting list, so a sister location is planned closer to downtown Abingdon. Other regions are also looking to Elderspirit as a model for senior housing throughout the country.

Originally a concept by members of a progressive group called FOCIS as a new community for its members to spend their golden years, Elderspirit is now more inclusive.

I asked what attracts new members to intentional communities today.

"Don't think that we're all alike here," Elderspirit resident Carol Edwards says. "We're all over the place when it comes to political philosophies and how we view the world."

Nevertheless, according to founder and executive director Dene Peterson, residents come to Elderspirit because it offers a co-housing retirement community where friends can live together in a supportive setting, with the autonomy of private dwellings. Potential members also envision an alternative to institutional longterm care, a place where emotional support of their peers

Photo courtesy Elderspirit.

can help them live out their lives at home.

According to Cicada from Zim Zam, the appeal of living in an intentional community is "to be in community with other vegans who share the desire to help create a better world."

At Pumpkin Hollow, Change, in his very noticeable British accent, speaks about his former addiction to technology and a rational type of life. Now he is working on living a life based on nonviolent communication.

What, I asked, is a typical day like in an intentional community? While everyone is expected to contribute to the upkeep and support of Short Mountain Sanctuary, for example, residents tend to adopt those tasks that fulfill them the most. Early morning will find Markiss out milking the goats. From the milk, people like SoAmI may make goat cheese, yogurt, and ice cream. Other residents gather eggs and feed the dogs and cats.

The sanctuary's most famous resident, Sandor Ellix Katz (or Sandorkraut, as he's known to his friends), the author of *Wild Fermentation: The Flavor, Nutrition, and Craft of Live-Culture Foods* and *The Revolution Will Not be Microwaved*, may be found spending his day experimenting with food cultures or ferments.

Other jobs that require day-to-day attention include the sanctuary's organic garden and orchard. A resident at Short Mountain may want to take an outdoor shower in the morning, use the outdoor compost toilet, and sit in the solar-powered sauna.

SoAmI and fellow residents often use part of their time working on the community's quarterly magazine, *RFD: A Country Journal for Queer Folk Everywhere*. Valencia, fresh from a trip to Australia, where she lived among Aborigines for a year, works on the sanctuary's newsletter for members and supporters. And they all pitch in to make plans for the sanctuary's two, ten-day faerie gatherings in May and October.

A day at Pumpkin Hollow, on the other hand, may have Viva on her day off from her job working at a non-profit in Nashville, doing tasks much like those who live outside the community. She catches up on her laundry, prepares meals, and works with Change and Singular preparing for community events at the Barn.

As an intern at Pumpkin Hollow, Singular helps in the Barn with *Fifth Estate*, North America's oldest anti-authoritarian publication. The Barn has been renovated into an office, library-archive, media center, cultural clubhouse, and living space for the intern. Change recently worked to catalog old issues of *Fifth Estate* and helped renovate the Barn for homegrown variety shows and touring circuses, punk rock ensembles, and oldtime string bands. Then there's the constant care of the numerous dogs and cats at the collective.

Cicada at Zim Zam says that residents of his small cooperative work regular jobs in the community. "Some evenings we have shared meals. There are occasional work days for the house as a group," he explains. "We also sometimes have house fun days and host occasional vegan potlucks."

A few miles west of Zim Zam, Long Branch daily life is reported to revolve around sharing—the place, the people and their skills—with youngsters and adults from the general public. Gallimore may greet visitors who come to hike the trails, bird watch, visit the demonstration passive solar residences and greenhouses, or even participate in whatever is going on at the moment, whether it is gardening, building, or a migratory bird census.

Long Branch staff circulate in the greater Southern Appalachian area, where they speak on everything from environmental action to alternative energy, while cooperating with other organizations to further public awareness of the need for resource conservation and environmental integrity.

These communities represent just a sample of the value systems, lifestyles, and economic desires found in Appalachian intentional communities. Many discover that living in a totally self-sufficient community off the grid, with its own food, shelter, and water, is very attractive during these fearful times of global warming, terrorist attacks, and astronomical oil prices. Others are simply looking for solid communal relationships that will help them feel truly human and a part of an interdependent lifestyle. ❖

A native of Iowa, Rachael Roberts Bliss has lived in the Appalachian region since 1973. She met her husband Ron Bliss at the University of Iowa, where both majored in journalism. Now a VISTA volunteer, she is giving a year of her life to work for the Western North Carolina Alliance.

the confidence of a firecracker in a moment of silence

By JOE QUINN

they say "jesus didn't go to college"
but jesus didn't stay in a small town long
and if that's the cross you bear
where you going to take it?
I hear there's a hill overlooking
the abandoned factories below
and in secret we still manufacture trojan horses
quiet kids waiting to raise their flags and their
voices
and when it seems you're left with no choices
remember your parents' faces in the light of their
torches

Joe Quinn is a twenty-eight-year-old poet, photographer, and musician living in Kentucky. His second poetry collection, *Love Story in Braille,* is available online from Lulu Marketplace.

VITIS APPALACHIA

By SARAH THOMAS

When the words "Appalachia" and "wine" are paired, folks may tend to think of fruit wines—blackberry, peach, maybe even dandelion. Or if they do think of grapes, it's probably Concord, Catawba, or Muscadine. But the prized European *vitis vinifera* is gaining ground in the mountains and winemakers are winning awards.

My first step toward drinking Appalachian wine was taken when I visited Frank Androczi's Little Hungary Farm Winery in Buckhannon, West Virginia, not far from our family farm. He made mead—a blend of grapes, apples, pears, and honey—and the result was a rich, sweet wine that was an excellent first step down the road to enjoying the fermented fruit for the rest of my life.

Frank, who had little to do with doctors, once told us a story about how he was kept waiting for a checkup. He finally went to his car, fetched a bottle of mead, and left it

Frank Androczi at Little Hungary Farm Winery. Photograph by Michael Keller, courtesy Goldenseal *magazine.*

with the receptionist along with the message that if the doctor were to drink a glass a day, he wouldn't need a doctor, either. Born in Semjenhaza, Hungary, in 1915, Frank died in 2005. Although his longevity may not have been attributable to wine-drinking, it certainly didn't seem to hurt.

But Frank, who started his operation in 1985, was neither the first nor the last to earn a living making wine in Appalachia. And several up-and-coming wineries are starting to see success with *vitis vinifera*—a grape long thought to be a failure in the cooler, often wet mountains of Appalachia.

The big breakthrough in growing vinifera grapes on the east coast of the United States came when Dr. Konstantin Frank, a Russian-born professor of plant science, came to New York in 1951. After several years of hard work, he was successful in growing the world's most popular wine grapes in New York. Today every state in Appalachia has at least a few vinifera grapes being grown and made into wine.

In her *Wine Bible*, author and teacher Karen MacNeil defines a classic variety of wine as one that "has manifested considerable quality over a long period of time" and has "done so in more than one place." Among classic white wines, she includes chardonnay, chenin blanc, Riesling, and sauvignon blanc—the reds include cabernet sauvignon, merlot, pinot noir, and syrah. Of these, the vinifera grapes likeliest to succeed in Appalachia include chardonnay, Riesling, cabernet sauvignon, and merlot. Other varietals such as viognier and cabernet franc are also meeting with success.

West Virginia

West Virginia may have something of a reputation for producing moonshine, but it isn't high on many folks' lists of places to go to find good wine. That stereotype has not deterred several fine winemakers who are having success not only with French-American hybrids like Norton, seyval blanc, and vidal blanc but are also producing some very nice chardonnays and cabernets.

Located in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia, Potomac Highland Winery was founded in 1992 by Dr. Charles Whitehill. He and his wife Becky compare the terrain of their vineyard with Germany. "The winery's vineyard consists of gently sloping hills. The abundance of shale in the soil gives this region a similar 'terroir' to that of Germany, although the climate is drier," they say.

The Whitehills also point out that the region often experiences a late summer or early fall drought that provides an advantageous stressing of the vines, resulting in a concentration of the grape sugars. Among the couple's vinifera grapes are pinot noir, Riesling, and chardonnay.

When Paul and Anna-Neale Taylor discovered a tangle of wild grapes growing along the hillside on their farm in the Ohio River Valley, they decided to give winemaking a try. The eventual result was Roane Vineyards in Spencer. The first test grapes were planted in 1996, and the vineyards officially started in 1997.

Today the Taylors cultivate eight varieties of mostly French-American hybrid grapes in addition to a section of cabernet franc planted in the spring of 2003. From the varieties of grapes grown at Roane Vineyards, the winery consistently makes fourteen different wines including the cabernet franc and a chardonnay. Their award-winning elderberry wine represents a taste of old-time West Virginia.

Kentucky

Kentucky's wine-making history stretches all the way back to 1798 when America's first commercial vineyard was planted in the state by the winemaker for the Marquis de Lafayette. By the late 1800s,

The production room at Kentucky's Elk Creek Vineyards. Photo courtesy Elk Creek Winery.

Kentucky was the third largest grape and wine producer in the United States. Then came Prohibition.

But wine is making a comeback, and visitors will find Elk Creek Vineyards nestled among rolling hills in Owenton. In 2003, the owners began by believing that the only way to make great wines was to know what grows best on Kentucky soil, to hand-select the finest grapes at harvest, and to limit production. Vinifera varietals offered include pinot noir, merlot, chardonnay, and Riesling.

Winemaker Ben O'Daniel was proud to point out that some of Elk Creek's wines—vinifera included—won awards at a prestigious competition. He wrote, "We recently received four awards at the 2008 *San Francisco Chronicle* Wine Competition. Our vidal blanc garnered a silver, and the petite syrah, merlot, and blush took home bronze awards. We're pleased that a left coast competition has recognized our efforts."

Virginia

Just to the south, Virginia is one of the top wine-producing states with an illustrious history that includes Thomas Jefferson's failed attempts to grow vinifera grapes following his service as ambassador to France. Fortunately, there were later attempts. According to MacNeil, "Between 1979 and 1986 the hard-won success of Virginia's chardonnays, cabernets, and Rieslings caused vineyard acreage in the state to jump 420 percent."

While vineyards are scattered throughout the state, there are several successful wineries in the Appalachian region. William, Nancy, and David Morrisette began Chateau Morrisette in Floyd County in 1978 with the first commercial wines produced in 1982. While David got things started with his degree in enology and viticulture from the University of Mississippi, today the principal winemaker is Dan Tallman, formerly of Clos Du Bois Winery in California.

Robert Burgin, executive vice president and general manager, said the winery grows pinot noir, chardonnay, Riesling, cabernet sauvignon, and merlot in its vineyards while also purchasing cabernet franc, petit verdot, and tannat from other vineyards in the state.

Wine production has increased rapidly each year and now surpasses 60,000 cases annually. The consistent growth rate necessitated a new production facility, and the Morrisettes expanded and modernized all aspects of the winery in 1999. Additions included a new wine production facility and a spacious hospitality center constructed of salvaged timber from the St. Marie River. The result is one of the largest salvaged timber frame buildings in North America at 32,365 square feet with 135,000 board feet of recycled Douglas fir timbers.

Just a mile down the road from Chateau Morrisette is Villa Appalaccia Winery, offering Appalachian wine Italian style. The vineyards are planted predominantly with Italian grape varieties including sangiovese, primitivo (zinfandel), pinot grigio, malvasia, and aglianico. The vineyard is one of the few in Virginia not planted in clay but rather shale, much as it would be in parts of Italy.

Winemaker Susanne Becker and winegrower Stephen Haskill worked together as immunologists in the Lineberger Cancer Center in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, before heading for the hills to make wine. Today, they produce around 3,000 cases a year, from grapes grown on-site.

Abingdon Vineyard and Winery offers an extensive menu of vinifera wines including chardonnay, viognier, Riesling, a white pinot noir, cabernet franc, and cabernet sauvignon. Owners Janet Lee Nordin and Bob Carlson came to Virginia from Chicago by way of Florida after retiring from AT&T. Both are master gardeners and have studied viticulture and enology at Virginia Tech. Nordin has received a certificate from the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, in viticulture and enology.

Located on fifty-three acres along the South Holston River in Washington County, the winery is just one-half mile from the Virginia Creeper Trail, which runs from Abingdon to White Top Mountain. The vineyard currently provides ten acres of grapes, and the winery produces more than 7,000 gallons of wine annually.

North Carolina

North Carolina is another state clearly making its mark in the wine world. As of January 2007 the state was the tenth largest producer of both grapes and wine in the United States. The designation of the

Yadkin Valley as North Carolina's first American viticulture area in 2003 has also helped boost the state's wine reputation. And while many wineries grow native grapes and French-American hybrids, there are several mountain vineyards holding their own with vinifera.

The vineyards at one of the largest wineries in Appalachia are entirely vinifera. Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina, is probably best known for its 250-room chateau, but its wines are making a strong showing on the national scene. A significant annual producer of 125,000 cases of wine, the company makes no bones about using grapes from other states as close by as South Carolina and as far away as California and Oregon. There are, however, several good wines made from grapes grown on the estate.

"We're excited about the growth of our winery and the attention it's been receiving," said Bill Cecil, Jr., president and CEO of The Biltmore Company and great-grandson of estate owner George W. Vanderbilt. "North Carolina is gaining a reputation for producing quality wines, and we hope to continue to lead the charge in educating wine enthusiasts and novices alike about what our state has to offer."

Chardonnay is a strong producer for Biltmore and is used in some of the company's sparkling wines. The cabernet franc—used in blends by most wineries—is made into a fine, stand-alone wine that has won several major awards including the best of class, gold, and platinum awards at the Los Angeles International Wine & Spirits Competition in May 2007.

A little farther south in North Carolina, a 200-acre farm owned by Lee Griffin and Marsha Cassedy was first planted with vines in 1991. The initial plantings at Rockhouse Vineyards were a mixture of both vinifera and French-American hybrid vines. Soon, however, Rockhouse began to concentrate exclusively on vinifera grapes because, Griffin said, "Quite simply, vinifera makes better wine."

Each year more vines were planted and experiments carried out to determine the best clones and rootstocks for the Tryon area. Challenges include fungus from humid summers and too much rain during the fall harvest as a result of hurricanes blowing storms in from the coast. But persistence paid off and by 1996, there were four acres of chardonnay planted, with smaller quantities of merlot and cabernet sauvignon.

In 1998, after a number of years of home winemaking, Griffin and Cassedy decided to take their hobby commercial. Rockhouse enjoyed unexpected success with its first vintage: a bronze medal for both its 1998 chardonnay and its 1998 merlot at the San Diego National Wine Competition, and a silver medal for its 1998 Chambourcin at the International Eastern Wine Competition in New York.

In 1999, the vineyard was expanded, with three and a half acres planted to viognier and the same amount of land planted to cabernet franc. There is also some petite verdot. Total Rockhouse grape-producing acreage stands at ten.

"Since we were the first to plant vines in the area, there wasn't much history to go by," said Griffin. "We have had to experiment with various rootstocks, clones, and trellis systems to find out what works best in our area. Although we will always continue to experiment, we are getting closer to what works best in our microclimate."

Tennessee

Just across the mountain ridge from North Carolina is the Corey

Biltmore winemaker Bernard Delille samples a red wine from the barrel.
Photo courtesy Biltmore, Asheville, North Carolina.

Ippolito Vineyard in Blountville, Tennessee. Inspired by his grandfather's roots in Sonnino, Italy, Frank Corey and his wife Nancy decided to open an Italian-style winery in 1999. They include merlot and chardonnay on their wine list but are currently growing only cabernet franc, which they use for blending.

"We are planting cabernet sauvignon soon, since we have been so successful with the cabernet franc," said the Coreys. "We have really had no challenges or difficulties."

Other wines blended from American and French-hybrid grapes reflect the family's Italian heritage. They include Bella Rosso, Sonnino Sunset, and Rocco Bianco. In addition to a vineyard and winery, the Coreys offer guests a bed and breakfast on-site and a wedding and meeting facility. Guests are, of course, welcome to stroll the vineyards with a glass of wine in hand. ❖

To learn more about wineries in Appalachia, check out the following links:

All areas – www.allamericanwineries.com
West Virginia – www.wvexplorer.com
Kentucky – www.kywineries.com
Virginia – www.virginiawines.org
North Carolina – www.ncwine.org
Tennessee – www.tennesseewines.com

Vineyard at Corey Ippolito Winery in Blountville, Tennessee. Photo courtesy Corey Ippolito Winery.

A native of French Creek, West Virginia, Sarah Thomas now lives in Asheville, North Carolina, with her husband. She is the director of development and public relations for Presbyterian Home for Children in Black Mountain, North Carolina.

THE MAN WHO SAVED A MOUNTAIN

By MICHAEL JOSLIN

The westering sun struck fire from the maples and oaks on Grandfather Mountain as I pulled to the lower side of the Blue Ridge Parkway south of Linn Cove viaduct. I parked my pickup on the shoulder. Grabbing my camera bag, I hurried to set up my tripod to capture the backlit beauty. As I pressed the button on my cable release, I heard a car park behind mine. Preoccupied by my viewfinder and knowing that light is fleeting, I kept my eye on my work. Hearing steps approaching, I turned to see a tall, silver-haired gentleman with a venerable Nikon standing near me, focusing his lens. After the shutter snapped, he lowered the camera. His glasses glinted as he said, "I'm glad to see you found this spot. Your timing was perfect."

A proprietary pride lay beneath his soft North Carolina accent. As I reached out to shake his hand, I felt the typical pleasure that meeting Hugh Morton always brought. Whether I was interviewing him for an article, asking him for some photographic advice, or simply bumping into him on the mountain as we both enjoyed the natural wonder and sought to capture it on film, Hugh Morton was invariably enthusiastic and warm, but

Hugh Morton stands at the entrance to the new Mile High Swinging Bridge the day before the dedication. Photo courtesy Michael Joslin.

direct and specific. There was no nonsense about the man. He always focused on the task at hand, and he always had many tasks. His energy and drive reminded me of Daniel Boone's; his political sense and wide connections reminded me of Davy Crockett's.

By an interesting paradox, one of the great modern pioneers of western North Carolina was also one of the most urbane citizens of his state. Hugh Morton, whose stewardship of Grandfather Mountain made him a legend in Southern Appalachia, developed friendships in the coves of Avery County, the halls of academia, the statehouse of North Carolina, and the White House. When Morton died in 2006, the mountains, the state, and the nation lost a unique leader who contributed his time, considerable energy, and abundant talents to a wide range of issues and problems.

...one of the great modern pioneers of western North Carolina was also one of the most urbane citizens of his state.

I call Morton a pioneer not because he lived a rugged existence in the mountains but because over his lifetime he showed us a new way to protect the land and the wild creatures of the earth, air, and water that have found their homes here. Using his skill as a photographer, his influence as one of the most well-connected men in North Carolina, his tenacity, and his imagination, he has given the world a paradigm for protecting our precious resources while benefiting from their natural beauty and power.

When I met Morton a quarter century ago, he already had a long history of working to protect Grandfather Mountain, which he inherited from his grandfather Hugh McRae in 1952. Developing the Mile-High Swinging Bridge, the Visitor Center, wildlife habitats for bears, eagles, cougars, and deer, and an extensive trail system, Hugh Morton created a self-sustaining attraction that left most of the mountain to nature while introducing hundreds of thousands of tourists to Grandfather's wonders. While many man-made trails traverse the mountain and snake into hidden coves, many more animal paths wind through the spruce-fir forest, the rhododendron hells, and the hardwood forest. Natural habitats throughout Grandfather's vast acreage far outnumber the developed habitats where tourists flock to see bears, deer, cougars, otters, and eagles.

He continually responded to challenges to the mountain's integrity. Over the past half century when most privately-owned mountains have lost their wild nature to become tamed habitats for the affluent, Morton discovered a way to maintain ownership, pay taxes, preserve the wild, and make the mountain an ambassador for itself and its denizens. Drawing upon his wide-ranging connections, his abundant energy, his stubborn tenacity, his seductive charm, and his considerable public relations skills, he helped Grandfather remain Grandfather Mountain rather than becoming Grandfather Amusement Park.

One of his most valuable skills in his quest to preserve the mountain was his photography. An accomplished photographer since his teenage years, Morton captured for seventy years the wildness and majesty of the mountains and the wild creatures that make their home in nature. Published in almost every major national magazine, he created a body of work of scenic and nature photography, as well as sports, political, and personality photography, that is unmatched in the region.

In the late 1980s with Edward L. Rankin, Jr., he co-authored and illustrated with his photographs *Making a Difference in North Carolina*, a book whose title defined Morton's life. He later wrote and prepared the popular

book *Hugh Morton's North Carolina*, published by the University of North Carolina Press in 2003, and its sequel, *Hugh Morton: North Carolina Photographer*, in 2006. Showing his wide acquaintance and insatiable need to document his era through film, these books include Morton's photographs of presidents from Harry Truman to Bill Clinton, as well as governors, entertainment stars, sports heroes, and various denizens of the mountains from Grandfather's workers to cougars, bears, deer, and eagles. He helped "discover" Andy Griffith, was friends with Michael Jordan, and loved Mildred the Bear, all of whom he "shot" many times. Fortunately for us, his books preserve photographs that are an invaluable record not only of his life but also the life of his state, and they form an enduring part of his legacy.

Using his camera to record the ever-changing beauty of Grandfather Mountain through the four seasons, he promoted it as a tourist attraction but also as a priceless part of earth's natural heritage. In books, brochures, displays, and slide shows, his photographs communicated his love for this mountain in particular and Southern Appalachia in general.

Unselfishly, Hugh Morton shared his love of photography and knowledge of the art with anyone interested in the special nature of Southern Appalachia. In annual photography seminars for the many and with personal tips for individuals, he increased the number and quality of photographs of the region to spread his gospel of the area's natural wealth. In 1986 when he found that I was still using Kodachrome film to shoot the color for a story I was preparing about Grandfather, he invited me to his house for a graphic lesson. He pulled out a tray with slides taken of the same scenery with Kodachrome film and Fujichrome. Projecting the images, he showed me that in comparison after comparison the Fujichrome photographs were superior.

"And I'm not showing you this because I love the Japanese," he said, referring to the film's country of origin and to wounds he suffered from Japanese soldiers during World War II in the Pacific. "But if they have a better film, I'm going to use it and endorse it."

He was typically unambiguous with his words. In my first interview with Morton, he presented his message on the mountain to me clearly.

"We're trying to protect our mountain. It's very simple," he said in a strong tone that left no doubt of his conviction. "We've got the prettiest mountain up here. Nothing in the way of manmade 'improvements' can improve the beauty of the mountain. If we can preserve that beauty, we'll be going long after other people with their Ferris wheels, neon lights, and cotton candy have gone out of business."

Over the years he backed up his words with actions. He fought the federal government to protect the mountain from the ravages of road-building when Blue Ridge Parkway engineers wanted to bring the scenic highway over the high route, which would have threatened the fragile habitat and would have forever changed the character of the mountain. The Linn Cove Viaduct, one of the world's engineering marvels, was the happy result of his stubborn refusal to bend. In the early 1990s he led the fight to protect Southern Appalachia and North Carolina

Hugh Morton trained his grandson Crae Morton to take over as president of Grandfather Mountain, Inc. Photo courtesy Michael Joslin.

from the ravages of air pollution and acid rain. He researched the problem, and after discovering the extent of the area's environmental degradation, he said, "We are going to see, by God, that people are aware of the problem and that something can be done about it."

Morton initially developed a slide presentation and lecture to present the issue to the public; then he photographed and produced the documentary *The Search for Clean Air,* narrated by Walter Cronkite. Carried nationally on PBS, the program awakened viewers to the very real damage pollution and acid rain wreak on trees, streams, lakes, and such unlikely places as the Charlotte Speedway.

"We're trying to protect our mountain. It's very simple," he said in a strong tone that left no doubt of his conviction.

"I want the average man on the street to recognize the problem. Congress doesn't lead; it follows. We want to make everyone aware of the dangers so that the pressure is there to do something about it," he said, sitting in his office where a sign on the wall proclaimed his philosophy: "Everything cometh to he who waiteth, as long as he who waiteth worketh like hell while he waiteth."

Working was a way of life for Hugh Morton. In recent years he added the Nature Museum to Grandfather's attractions and brought otters into the habitats. Another tangible fruit of his labors is the designation of Grandfather Mountain as an International Biosphere Reserve as part of the United Nations' Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization Program on Man and the Biosphere. This project is designed to monitor man's impact on his environment and to increase awareness of how our fate is linked to our planet's. As the only privately-owned reserve in the program, Grandfather Mountain is unique among the 482 biosphere reserves in 102 countries.

"For us to be the first privately-owned one in the world is something to be proud of. I hope we won't be the last, but I am certainly proud to be the first," said Morton when I interviewed him for a story on the Biosphere designation in 1992.

He worked to protect the fragile ecosystem, home for sixty-six species of rare and endangered plants and animals, by partnering with the Nature Conservancy to create conservation easements for much of the mountain's acreage. He donated scenic easements to the North Carolina Nature Conservancy to protect 1,766 acres of the mountain. "When combined with other donations and purchases from Morton and his business partner John Williams, the Conservancy now owns or manages more than 4,000 acres of Grandfather Mountain," according to the attraction's website, www.grandfather.com.

Hugh Morton's final job was finding someone to carry on his legacy. The hands-on leadership day to day on the mountain has a great impact on the health of the mountain both in business terms and in ecological terms. He brought his grandson Hugh McRae Morton III to the mountain, and after the younger Morton had served a rigorous apprenticeship, established him as the president of Grandfather Mountain, Incorporated.

When I interviewed the two Mortons in November of 2006, Grandfather's grandfather said of his successor: "He's got the enthusiasm. He's done every job on the mountain himself. I didn't put him up to it. He just wanted to try every job. He's worked the entrance gate, maintenance crew, animal habitats, gift shops, restaurant, trails, and even night security."

Crae (as the younger Morton is called) has thrown himself into the job wholeheartedly, and in many ways he echoes his grandfather's words when he says: "Letting

people know the significance of this unique treasure is important. There is our spirit of stewardship. We want to make sure that people know that it is the goal of the company and the owners to preserve the mountain so that fifty years from now it is not too much different than it is today."

After a lifetime of service to his state and nation and of finding unique ways to maintain the vitality of one of the oldest mountains on earth, Hugh Morton has gone to his rest. While he was given much talent, intelligence, energy, and a mountain, he accomplished much in many diverse spheres. Not the least of his accomplishments is showing the world how a private individual can protect and preserve nature through wise stewardship. He will be missed.

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Michael Joslin lives with his wife, Pam, on a farm in the Buladean community of Mitchell County, North Carolina. Through photography and stories, he celebrates the wildness, beauty, and values of Appalachian nature and culture. He is a professor at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina, where he teaches literature, writing, and photography.

Knowing

By SYLVIA WOODS

A child of Depression, blue-veined hands
map a life drawn from hilly acres, hands that
suckered tobacco, weeded corn, dug potatoes, endured
loss of child and man, palms open to help neighbors, kin.
On her front porch, she leans forward in painted chair,
breaks the tip of a half-runner, tugs string
down its spine. The pile grows like green spaghetti.
"Did you know the Chinese stir-fry green beans?"
asks a niece, the one who went to Europe junior year.
"And the French cut them slantwise with a knife."
"I simmer beans with a little fatback,
cook them hours, steam up the windows,
bake cornbread hot and crusty in the skillet
Mama left me." Mae says, "That is what I know."

Sylvia Woods teaches English in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Her work has appeared in *Tennessee English Journal, Appalachian Heritage,* and other regional publications.

THE TRAIL OF THE LONESOME PINE AT ONE HUNDRED

By TAMARA BAXTER

The year 2008 marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the publication of John Fox, Jr.'s best-selling novel *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine.* Charles Scribner's Sons first printed a staggering 100,000 copies and simultaneously published in The London (Constable) edition. Soon 200,000 more copies were printed. The novel was the third best seller in 1908 and fifth in 1909. After the first three printings sold quickly, the book was published nineteen more times. More than two million copies have now sold.

John Fox, Jr. had already become a popular novelist by 1908. He began his publishing career in 1895 with *A Cumberland Vendetta and Other Stories,* followed by *Hell-fer-Sartain and Other Stories*, and his first novel, *The Kentuckians*, in 1897. Between 1899 and 1906, Fox published six novels, including *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* in 1903, the first novel to sell one million copies.

Fox was born on December 16, 1862, at Stony Point, Kentucky, and was educated by his father, the principal at Stony Point

Illustration of John Fox, Jr. by Samuel Crowe.

Academy. He attended Transylvania College before enrolling at Harvard University, where he graduated cum laude in 1883. He was twenty years old and the youngest member of his class. Fox spent his vacation time as a reporter for the *New York Sun* before entering Columbia Law School. Harriet Holman's essay on Fox includes his 1908 personal sketch. In his narrative, Fox writes, "I had been on the *Sun* for two months and it took me two years to get over it. . . . As a reporter, I was a failure—I hadn't the 'news sense.'"

Fox left Columbia Law School after three months. He worked for the *New York Times* for four months until he fell ill with tuberculosis and went home to die. In his narrative, he writes, "At home I ran upon a letter written to my father by a New York physician and saying that nothing could be done for me and that my finish was only a matter of time. . . . Anyway, a local doctor got me out of bed in six weeks but that trouble . . . kept laying me out periodically for years until a decade ago, and it harmlessly abides with me today."

According to Fox's narrative, he then moved to Jellico, Tennessee. Though he spent long intervals bedridden, sometimes he kept books for the family business ventures in coal-mining and real estate. He eventually moved to Big Stone Gap, Virginia, an industrial area in the boom days of the 1890s. When the real estate boom of the Gap collapsed, Fox and his family were trapped in debilitating debt. Still burdened with illness, Fox turned to writing. As he recuperated, he wrote stories for New York magazines and gave public lectures to help pay his debts.

According to Edward Tucker's biographical essay in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, at a public lecture, Fox met Theodore Roosevelt, "who, after becoming president, invited Fox to the White House to read his stories. In 1898 Fox went to Cuba to report the Spanish-American War for *Harper's Weekly,* and in 1904 he visited the Orient as a Scribner's correspondent to report the Russo-Japanese War."

Fox's experience as a war correspondent traveling with Roosevelt's Rough Riders inspired his Civil War novel, *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*, and with the profits from that novel, Fox was finally able to pay his debts.

After publication of *The Trail,* Fox continued to enjoy financial stability and divided his time between Big Stone Gap, where he preferred to write, and New York, where he intermingled with sophisticates, among them Fritze Scheff, a Viennese opera star, whom he married in 1908 after a twenty-four-hour courtship. Fox built a house for Scheff in Big Stone Gap, but she never liked it there. They divorced in 1913. Fox died of pneumonia on July 8, 1919, in a Knoxville hospital. He was buried in Paris, Kentucky.

The Trail of the Lonesome Pine reflects Fox's own personal struggle between his love for mountain life and his desire for sophisticated society. Readers liked Fox's story line: Sophisticated city man falls in love with innocent mountain girl. The protagonist, John Hale, is a civil engineer who comes into the mountains in search of coal. He buys land and mineral rights from local mountain landowners who underestimate the value of their property. Hale invites other mining companies into the area to buy land and mine the rich coal deposits.

"As a reporter, I was a failure—I hadn't the news sense."

Meanwhile, Hale meets a beautiful mountain girl, June Tolliver, on the Trail of the Lonesome Pine, named for a colossal pine tree standing alone in a rocky chasm of Lonesome Cove. While June is twelve or thirteen, and a child, Hale is drawn to her immediately and shows a fatherly interest in her. However, June's first cousin, Dave Tolliver, has marked June as his own and will fight Hale to take June back. June's father, Devil Judd Tolliver, comes to trust the outsider and allows Hale to supervise June's education. She attends school in the village, then in Louisville, before going to New York where she is fully transformed into an educated lady.

Meanwhile, John Hale remains in the mountains, losing his sophisticated manners and dressing like the locals. He becomes a member of the Volunteer Guard as the long-standing mountain feud between Old Judd Tolliver's family and the Falins becomes more violent.

The coal companies continue to damage the mountains, and what begins as a boom in the novel ends in bust. Hale loses everything, and June must return to the mountains. At first she is disgusted with the

manners of her people, but she soon re-identifies with them. She parts ways with Hale, who sees that her uncle, Bad Rufe, is hanged for murder. Old Judd leaves the mountains for the west, taking June with him. However, in the end, June returns and she and Hale are married.

While recent scholars place much of the blame for local color stereotypes on the success of *The Trail*, Cratis Williams writes in *The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction* that Mary Noailles Murfree first established the "basic props and most of the character stereotypes to be used in mountain fiction down to 1930." Fox and other local color writers, even some from New York who had never set foot in the mountains, modeled their fiction after Murfree's slovenly women, toothless crones, broods of children, revenue officers, preachers, witches, storekeepers, and beautiful maids, to list a few.

Cratis Williams concludes that Murfree's creation of a literary mountaineer from a narrowly limited "real mountaineer" was so successfully done that "writers who have attempted to present a literary mountaineer based on any type of real mountaineer other than the one she selected have met with an indifferent popular success."

Fox adopted many of Murfree's stock characters, but he made some changes. Fox's omniscient narrative downplays the importance of the moonshiner. He drops the blacksmith altogether. He adopts a mill keeper in *The Trail* in lieu of a crossroads storekeeper and reinvents the crossroads as the area beneath the lonesome pine. Whereas Murfree's mountaineers favored vigilante justice, Fox's characters were becoming, as Williams writes, "accustomed to the presence of law" and, beginning "with the approach of education, to recognize the necessity for order." Murfree's female mountain protagonists remained unlearned, but Fox would "subject" June to an education "in order to prepare her for her role as the wife of some idealized exponent of the American middle class," according to Williams.

Though the *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* perpetuated some of the most blatant hillbilly stereotypes, the numerous movie versions of the novel, which focused exclusively on feuding, violence, moonshining, and melodramatic romance, did far more damage. According to J. W. Williamson's *Southern Mountaineers in Silent Films,* "The mountaineers of local-color fiction migrated with ease into film . . . and with an even greater impact than they had had in the magazines." In the 1916 DeMille adaptation, Hale is a revenue officer on the hunt for mountain moonshiners. The 1936 film is noted most for the stellar performances of Fred MacMurray as Hale and emerging star Henry Fonda as Dave Tolliver. Notably, the *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* was the first feature Technicolor film made outdoors. A musical number in the film, "A Melody from the Sky," was nominated for an Academy Award. To the director's credit, the film does show outsiders taking advantage of gullible local people willing to give their mineral rights away, unaware that the mountains will be destroyed. Universal reissued the film in 1997.

Once the novel was popularized by the movies, stage versions were written by Eugene Walter in 1912 and Alice Chadwicke in 1937. The famous song "Trail of the Lonesome Pine" was written for the 1937 Laurel and Hardy film *Way Out West.* Stage and screen adaptations gave the novel a life of its own beyond the printed pages and created its popular longevity.

The Trail of the Lonesome Pine has received more critical review in recent years than in any period after its publication. In 1908, the novel received rave reviews. According to Michael Bernier, "The reviewers uniformly praised the plot and story line." A *New York Times* reviewer wrote, "Here is a romance of the Southern mountains, every page of which is delightful reading, every one of the characters in which—though some are dare-devil outlaws—is a welcome new acquaintance."

The *American Library Association Booklist* praised "the lead character's recognition of the innate qualities of the 'country girl,'" while *The Nation* commented on the book as "melodrama of so high a grade, so joyous an enthusiasm, and so compelling an interest as to give its reader an hour of uncritical pleasure." Book reviews dwindled after 1909 except for reviews of the outdoor drama performed annually at Big Stone Gap. Harriet Holman's essay about Fox reports the community's acceptance of the novel as "a good and true account of their people and their region."

In 1964 the people of the community gained the consent of Fox's surviving sister, Elizabeth Moore, and commissioned Earl Hobson Smith to write the outdoor drama, on condition "that they use neither the original stage version nor the film scenarity [sic]." The drama still runs each summer on an outdoor stage in the shadow of the mountains.

Some Appalachian scholars have viewed *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* in a positive light. John Ed Pearce's Foreword to the 1984 University of Kentucky edition says of *The Trail*: "It is also the account of the attempt of people to deal with change, to judge its offerings and accept its benefits without surrendering those customs and values that have given meaning and substance to their lives."

Pearce commends Fox's descriptions that show "deep feelings of sympathy and admiration" for "the mountains and their people." Pearce considers "Fox's use of early mountain dialect, his account of mountain folk-ways . . . impeccable." Further, he believes the novel expresses "the frustration and resentment with which the mountain men regarded the patronizing outsiders who came to develop and bring order to the hills that had been their kingdom, though he believed that in the new order lay the salvation of an able but deprived people." Pearce points to the novel's historical accuracy and says that many of the characters of the novel "strongly resemble well-known mountaineers."

Ron Eller echoes Pearce's sentiments in his *Miners, Millhands and Mountaineers:* "More than any other writer of his day, John Fox, Jr., symbolized the struggle between the economic and intellectual forces of modernization and the traditional patterns of Appalachian life." George Brosi also credits Fox's "tremendous contribution to Appalachian Literature. His best-selling novels put the region on the map. His exciting plots and colorful characters combined to give an overdrawn, but sympathetic, view of the hill country to the world."

Appalachian scholars have renewed an interest in the local color period that ingrained the hillbilly image into the minds of the outside world, and unfortunately, into the minds of insiders as well. These scholars are highly critical of the novel, pointing to its popularity and great longevity as a main source of prevailing Appalachian stereotypes. Of particular note is Dwight Billings, Gurney Norman, and Katherine Ledford's seminal work, *Back Talk from Appalachia: Confronting Stereotypes.* In his Foreword, Ron Eller charges people of the region to confront stereotypes as a first step toward understanding themselves. Essentially, he argues that Appalachian self-identity is forged by how others view Appalachians.

Several scholars whose essays appear in *Back Talk* take a dim view of *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, and John Fox, Jr., overall. Ronald Lewis writes, "Local color Appalachia reached its apogee in the novels of John Fox Jr., undoubtedly the most popular author of the genre. . . . Fox was a major figure in the creation of Appalachian *otherness*. . . . "

Darlene Wilson, a prominent Fox scholar, writes that his novels deliberately portrayed the Southern mountaineer women as unclean and the men as feudists, and that he wrote these accusations in letters to Theodore Roosevelt, who shared Fox's statements with Cabot Lodge and Henry Adams. Wilson argues that Fox's treatment of the Southern mountaineers as different was premeditated and self-serving and that "Fox chose his subject material out of a more gendered ambition to rescue the degraded national reputation of southern white manhood. More explicitly, he sought to celebrate white gentlemen from the incomparable Bluegrass region of central Kentucky who had suffered an emasculating loss of integrity among both Northerners and Southerners for their Civil War stance of neutrality."

Wilson believes Fox purposefully made mountaineers the "culprits

First American edition published in trade cloth binding, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1908. Photo courtesy Wonhorizon.

most responsible for the decline in status for southern manhood" by his "self-appointed role of cross-cultural translator." She writes that June Tolliver's character in *The Trail* served to remind the reader that she returns to the mountains from New York as a civilized person whose first mission is to "establish a 'clean,' flower-bedecked, 100 percent American household, according to the Bluegrass and blue-blood models of higher culture that she has been taught to recreate anywhere, even 'imprisoned' at home in impoverished 'mountain fastnesses.'"

Fox is criticized for aiding in the physical destruction of the mountains through coal-mining.

Several essays in *Back Talk* condemn John Fox Jr.'s character more than his literary talents, which most astute readers and scholars readily agree are average at best. Fox is criticized for aiding in the physical destruction of the mountains through coal-mining. Several essays in *Back Talk* contend that Fox's family businesses in coal and real estate benefited during the time of his literary acclaim.

Sharon Hatfield's true crime narrative *Never Seen the Moon: The Trials of Edith Maxwell* vividly illustrates how the nation and world came to view Wise, Virginia, in 1935 as the epicenter of hillbilly land and the land of the lonesome pine. Twenty-one-year-old Edith Maxwell, a schoolteacher in Wise County, was charged with murdering her father, Trigg Maxwell, in the family home after a late-night argument. Hearst reporters, in the heyday of yellow journalism, ran hundreds of articles about the case before it reached trial. Edith Maxwell became a worldwide celebrity overnight.

Hatfield says her story became a fictional version of Fox's novel, "a convenient mental reference point for reporters covering the Maxwell case because it was probably the most popular work about Appalachia they (and their readers) had ever encountered." Edith Maxwell became the Lonesome Pine girl.

Reporters wrote that Edith had "never seen the moon" because mountain women were not allowed to stay out late, the cause of Edith's argument with her father. Hearst reporters portrayed Edith as an educated young woman who was physically abused by her violent father. The newspaper stories also depicted frightened, cowed women who got old before their time and a community vilified as being hard, isolated, and suspicious of outsiders.

After Edith was found guilty, the newspapers portrayed her as a victim persecuted by her own community because she had broken a "mountain code." Edith was re-tried and again found guilty. An outraged public, who viewed Edith as the victim of her Appalachian heritage, and a letter to the governor of Virginia from Eleanor Roosevelt, resulted in a pardon. Warner Brothers released a hillbilly film, *Mountain Justice,* the rights to the story bought from and endorsed by Edith Maxwell. The lead character was cast as a teacher who had graduated from East State Normal School but was later changed to a nurse.

Hatfield reports that thousands of articles were written about the Edith Maxwell case, nearly all of them portraying Wise, Virginia, as a hillbilly town. She ends her book with these words: "And in the eyes of much of the nation, Appalachia—although now wired to the Internet and thoroughly Wal-Mart-ized—remains steadfastly the American other, a shadowland where youthful dreams are quickly extinguished."

Hatfield's beautifully written book illustrates the powerful, negative ways in which people identified with *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine.*

Cratis Williams, in *The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction,* views *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* favorably, stating that the novel, although romantic, ". . . may very well be the best fictional interpretation of mountain life ever achieved. It touches upon almost all the facets of mountain life and comes nearer to epitomizing the total history of mountain people than any other novel on the subject." Williams goes on to say, however, that *The Trail* " . . . is not a great book" as it does not "touch upon such aspirations of the human spirit as afford the bases of the great fiction in American literature."

The novel has enjoyed a popularity that Fox himself could not have imagined. Theories abound as to the reasons why, many of which point to urban America's need to "feel good again about home and whitebread," to quote J. W. Williamson.

Although Fox was not a great stylist, he viewed himself as a realistic writer and not a romantic one: "Until I went to Harvard I had never seen nor did I know that I should ever see a man who had painted a picture, carved a statue, or written a book, and yet I cannot remember a time since I was twelve years old that I did not think I would one day be a writer myself. And looking backward I see now that this idea was always with me for when I fell in love and began to keep a note book chiefly about the girl—I would now and then describe actual scene, report actual conversations on the theory that if I practiced on the truth, whatever fiction I might some day write would appear more like the truth." ❖

Tamara Baxter's short stories, poetry, and essays have appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, and she is the recipient of several prizes in fiction. Her collection of short fiction, *Rock Big and Sing Loud*, was published by the Jesse Stuart Foundation Press in May 2006. *Some Living Room* earned a Rose Post Creative Nonfiction Award in 2001.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

This early twentieth-century photograph is from the same family collection as the one pictured on this issue's front cover. Photo courtesy Hugh L. White collection, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University.

APPALACHIA AS A PLAYGROUND FOR THE PRIVILEGED

By ELIZABETH SIMS

The geographical spine spanning eastern Tennessee, western North Carolina, and West Virginia is a mountain range full of contradiction. Called variously the Appalachian, Great Smoky, Blue Ridge, and Allegheny Mountains, the ridges and coves and hollers are rich with a history and a people who defy a uniform description. Renegades, moonshine runners, Union sympathizers, Confederate leaders, literary giants, Native American royalty, pioneers, Revolutionary War heroes, scrappy Scots-Irish, country and bluegrass music legends, politicians of every stripe—all have called these mountains home.

The region also offers a study in the stark contrasts of class in America, from some of the most impoverished and isolated communities in the country to the established playgrounds of the extraordinarily wealthy. Some have lived here cornered (or entranced) by circumstance, coal mines, persistence, insulation, determination, stubbornness, tradition, and family. Others have sought the region out, delighted in their discovery of a place so remarkably beautiful, colorful, and

Aerial view; encompassing 6,500 acres of the Allegheny Mountains. Photo courtesy The Greenbrier.

inspiring. Alternately a home to cabins and castles, the Southern mountains can certainly lay claim to an identity that reflects the melting pot that is America.

The magnet which has drawn people of all types to the region over and over again is straight from the earth itself—water. Mineral water, sulphur springs, hot springs—whatever they are called—have carried mystical and medicinal powers since early Roman times. In a young America, as populations and subsequent illnesses grew, seeking the healing powers of "taking the waters" was more than just a Desotoan quest. It was often a matter of life and death and created a uniquely American resort industry in this mountain region.

One of the earliest examples is West Virginia's Greenbrier, developed following a discovery of sulphur springs in the late 1700s. In the early 1800s, word of the powers of the springs had spread and a cottage community was formed. Not only were the waters touted as an effective cure for all forms of rheumatism, the cottages and tavern had quickly become the preferred getaway for higher society. Wealthy families from the humid South and dusty cities in the Northeast would come via stagecoach for the summer. White Sulphur, as it was then called, was described as a place where the routine of calling cards and formality was put aside; one didn't even know the hour of the day or the day of the week.

In 1858, The Grand Central Hotel or Old White Hotel was constructed, providing guest rooms and a dining room. By this time, White Sulphur was well established as the haunt of the elite and a second home to presidents and diplomats. When the Civil War broke out, the hotel was transformed into a Confederate hospital. Later General Robert E. Lee and his family would escape to Greenbrier after the war in an attempt to vacation. Things changed dramatically when the first passenger train arrived in 1869 by a new railroad called the Chesapeake and Ohio. The remaining North-South factions came together at the Greenbrier in the name of social standing and fashion. The Annual Grand Fancy and Full Dress Ball began in 1873, and by the 1880s and 1890s, the presence of the press became a factor. A popular parlor dance called the "German" was the rage, and during this time, the golden age of resorts, guests routinely traveled from one to another—Cape May and the Catskills to Newport and Martha's Vineyard and down to Greenbrier before heading north to Saratoga Springs, Niagara Falls, and New Hampshire's White Mountains.

White Sulphur became known for its legendary Southern belles. The eligible and desirable young women who frequented the White danced well, dressed well, and conducted themselves with grace. According to one writer from Massachusetts in 1889, "The Lord made the White Sulphur Springs and then the Southern girl, and rested, satisfied with his work." It was here that champagne was consumed from a lady's shoe, Charles Dana Gibson met his future wife and inspiration for his "Gibson Girl" drawings, and where Miss Alva Smith of Mobile, Alabama, said "yes" to William K. Vanderbilt's proposal of marriage.

In 1910, the C&O Railroad purchased the property, and the construction of today's central portion of the Greenbrier began. The resort's proximity to Washington, D.C. (and the railroad's interest in generating traffic) precipitated its changing identities over the years, ranging from an army hospital again during World War II to a hotel and resort steeped in the history of welcoming twenty-eight presidents, royalty, celebrities, and business icons.

The resort's fame as a golf haven began modestly as a neighboring property to America's oldest golf course at Oakhurst,

actually a course for ancient golf using hickory sticks and gutties. Over time, however, golf put Greenbrier on the map and beckoned guests from all over the world, including the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Pulitzers, Carnegies, Rockefellers, and Kennedys.

The Greenbrier became a grand dame of East Coast resorts in part because of the famed interior design of Dorothy Draper, the golf legacy of Sam Snead, and the culinary star power of its restaurants. The spa is still a signature amenity, in keeping with the resort's founding, and outdoor activities across the Greenbrier's 6,500 acres are extensive.

Further south, rail was not available and there were no major cities supplying travelers to the area. In the 1800s, traversing the mountains of western North Carolina was no easy task. But drovers crisscrossed through Buncombe County, herding livestock to sell at market, trade for goods, and get a sense of what was going on in the world. Such activity was not viewed so much as socializing but rather as participating in commerce. But the primary crossroads became the center of what would turn into the city of Asheville, today characterized as the "Paris of the South," a reputation those hardy mountaineers could have never fathomed.

The turning point was the completion of the railroad into the area, connecting the previously isolated mountains to destinations such as Charleston. The trains brought industry and technology, sophisticated goods and people, entrepreneurs and business-minded men who saw the pristine beauty of the mountains as a goldmine for attracting the newly wealthy benefactors of the Industrial Age. The juxtaposition of cultures—Scots-Irish descendants who had settled happily into relative obscurity and the nouveau riche captains of industry—could have been a disastrous clashing of opposites. Add to the mix the legacy of Cherokee culture, the Charleston wealthy scrambling to escape Low Country heat, and a modest community of post-Reconstruction African Americans and Asheville was a true microcosm of an increasingly diverse America.

Diversity and natural beauty are still the main draws in this mountain city, but in the 1880s, Asheville and western North Carolina were blossoming as a newly discovered resort playground offering stunning, panoramic views of the Blue Ridge and rejuvenating hot springs and healthy air. Early visionaries and investors such as George Pack, a wealthy northern lumberman who had brought his wife to Asheville for its restorative water and air, built a library and public parks and purchased land for the relocation of the county courthouse. Franklin Coxe, who was from a wealthy Pennsylvania family and became an executive with the Western North Carolina Railroad, built upon his success in getting the railroad into the region with the 1886 construction of the Queen Anne-style Battery Park Hotel in Asheville. Located on twenty-two acres, the luxurious hotel transformed Asheville with its introduction of monied high society into the town. Ladies and gentlemen, demonstrating the utmost in

Indoor pool—built in 1912; features intricate, mosaic tilework. Photo courtesy The Greenbrier.

etiquette, wore formal attire, as did everyone from the band members to the headwaiter. The former drovers' crossroads had never seen anything like it.

The Battery Park, Greystone Inn on Lake Toxaway, and the Hot Springs Hotel in Madison County were all frequented by well-off seekers of rest, relaxation, and restoration. Summer homes were built in Asheville and near Toxaway in Highlands and Cashiers—still a popular vacation haven today. But it was the arrival of Maria Louisa Kissam Vanderbilt and her twenty-four-year old son George in the summer of 1886 which truly changed the future of Asheville. From the porch of the Battery Park, the young Vanderbilt determined this place was to be his home as well as a social experiment that would forever change the region. It was to be called Biltmore.

Over the course of the next three years, Vanderbilt's agent, Charles McNamee, would manage acquisition of 125,000 acres of western North Carolina on behalf of his benefactor. The land stretched from the historic site of the founding of Buncombe County at Gum Springs to Mount Pisgah, some nineteen miles away. Comprised of over-forested, over-farmed land, the parcel was the perfect place for a young and idealistic Vanderbilt to make a difference. In 1888, he asked a longtime family friend, Frederick Law Olmsted, to advise him on what to do with his purchase:

> Such land in Europe would be made a forest; partly, if it belonged to a gentleman of large means, as a preserve for game, mainly with a view to crops of timber. That would be a suitable and dignified business . . . and it would be of great value to the country. . . . My advice would be to make a small park into which to look from your house; make a small pleasure ground and garden, farm your river bottom chiefly to keep and fatten live stock with a view to manure; and make the rest a forest, improving the existing woods and planting the old fields.

Vanderbilt had also engaged another family friend, Richard Morris Hunt, with whom the young Vanderbilt had recently collaborated on the family's mausoleum in New York. Hunt, his wife Catherine, and Vanderbilt traveled extensively through France's Loire Valley and around England, incubating the creation of a home and estate in North Carolina. Early architectural renderings suggested Georgian pillars or Mediterranean villas. But it was French Renaissance architecture, a love of Hunt's from his studies at L'ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, that won the day.

Meanwhile, Olmsted was busy establishing a nursery and a conservatory to propagate plant materials for what would become Biltmore. He had constructed scaffolding to allow Vanderbilt to finalize the location of the house to afford the most spectacular views. Construction of the house began in 1889, a three-mile railroad spur from the depot in the village of Best bringing in tons of Indiana limestone and other building materials to the site. Vanderbilt and Hunt employed hundreds of artisans and craftsmen, many of whom had recently immigrated to America from Europe: stone carvers, carpenters, tile makers, metalworkers, sculptors, and masons.

For the first time since the Civil War, black workers toiled alongside white workers, performing the same jobs within the same work crews. The committed abolitionist Olmsted undoubtedly inspired the socially progressive Vanderbilt, and the mountain folk took notice. Vanderbilt was also establishing resources for the growing community of people he employed, building a

church, a school, a post office, and a hospital in the village of Best (today Biltmore Village) as well as a Young Men's Institute for African American men, the first of its kind in the country. The facility—which included a library and reading room, a gymnasium, and a pool—was built and began operating through a loan from Vanderbilt. But the business model he set up insisted upon the institute being run self-sufficiently by the African American community who used it, with revenue generated by the black-owned general store, barber shop, and other businesses housed within the center.

Vanderbilt and Olmsted were also committed to improving land management and agricultural practices in the region, again by helping others help themselves. The first school of forestry in America began on the estate and produced some of the first scientific foresters in the country. Agricultural efforts on Biltmore were state-of-the-art, and the Vanderbilts were instrumental in helping area farmers learn best practices, even establishing the first 4-H and county extension service in the mountains.

Over the years, Biltmore has been a hub for the Vanderbilts and their family friends. In the early years, visitors included Edith Wharton, Henry James, John Singer Sargent, and President William McKinley. Later, after Biltmore was opened to the public, it hosted President Jimmy Carter, Lady Bird Johnson, Prince Charles, Bill and Melinda Gates, Robert Redford, and Dr. Jane Goodall. Today, it welcomes over one million guests each year.

While Biltmore was underway, the city of Asheville was benefiting from the influx of people, resources, and positive outside influences and thinking. Besides the Battery Park Hotel, the Asheville landscape continued to boast some of the most upscale resort properties in the country. Kenilworth Inn was perched above Biltmore Village; the Manor Inn, with its adjacent cottages, opened in 1898; and the downtown Langren Hotel was completed in 1912. In addition, a number of smaller hotels and boarding houses thrived in the early 1900s, not the least of them Julia Wolfe's Old Kentucky Home, the setting for much of her son Thomas Wolfe's novel *Look Homeward, Angel.* Asheville had its own Grand Opera House by 1890, and in the early 1900s, the city auditorium opened and would host, over the years, Lionel and John Barrymore, Sarah Bernhardt, Al Jolson, and Harry Houdini.

It was yet another visitor in search of good health who would further establish Asheville as a resort town—E.W. Grove. Having made his fortune through the successful worldwide sales of his patented "Groves's Tasteless Chill Tonic" and his "Bromo-Quinine Laxative," Grove arrived in Asheville in 1897 on the recommendation of his physician, who thought the clean water and air would do him good. Although he owned successful developments in Florida and Atlanta, Grove preferred Asheville and decided to make it his home.

Grove is responsible for much of what are now the naturalistic neighborhoods of north Asheville, lined with large homes fanning out from what would be the entrepreneur's most

Exterior view of the Grove Park Inn. Photo courtesy Grove Park Inn.

impressive mark on the city, the Grove Park Inn. He wanted the resort to be nestled on Sunset Mountain with beautiful views of the downtown and the surrounding mountains, and he asked his son-in-law, Fred Seely, who had no architectural training, to sketch and ultimately supervise the construction of the massive stone hotel.

When the hotel opened in 1913, with a speech by William Jennings Bryan, it was instantly one of the grandest ones in the South and has, throughout its history, attracted the rich, the famous, and the infamous. Its golf course and famed Sunset Terrace have been hosts to such guests as Thomas Edison, Harvey Firestone, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and George Gershwin. Legend has it, in fact, that it was at Grove Park where Gershwin composed his "Rhapsody in Blue."

Today the hotel boasts a forty-million-dollar subterranean spa, several restaurants, tennis courts, a fitness center, and expansive meeting space and guest rooms—added on to the original structure in the 1990s. The inn is also home to one of the finest collections of Roycroft Arts and Crafts furnishings in America and celebrates this beautiful asset annually with a large arts and crafts event, drawing people from around the world.

Across town, while Grove was recreating the central part of Asheville and establishing his resort as one of the finest in America, Edith Vanderbilt, by that time a widow, had built Biltmore Forest Country Club and the subsequent township of Biltmore Forest on land that was originally part of the larger estate. The residential development quickly attracted some of the wealthiest families in America and continues to be home to some of America's finest mansions.

Southeast of Asheville, another established playground for the wealthy was unfolding at Chimney Rock and around Lake Lure. The Morse family from St. Louis, who bought the land around the monolithic Chimney Rock and flooded the valley to form Lake Lure, originally created the area. Today some of the most expensive homes in western North Carolina are being constructed around the lake, all with spectacular views of water, sky, and mountains.

And then there is the epitome of modern-day exclusivity, legendary service, and mountain beauty in Southern Appalachia, Blackberry Farm in Walland, Tennessee. The 4200-acre resort is at the end of a winding country road that feels like anything but the entrance to a five-star property. The core of the property is a clapboard farmhouse purchased and lovingly restored by Kreiss Beall and her husband Sandy, founder of the Ruby Tuesday restaurant chain. The original intention was to open the farmhouse as a quaint six-room inn, but demand resulted in sixty-five luxurious suites and cottages.

The Bealls' son Sam, who cut his teeth in Napa Valley at the French Laundry, now serves as Blackberry's gracious proprietor. He and his wife welcome well-off guests for a stay that can only be called pure indulgence. With a spa and a new, inspiringly ambitious culinary center, the young Beall is focusing on his gentleman's farming operation, complete with cheesemaker, butcher, master gardener, jammery, smokehouse, and enormous wine cellar. His vision is to reconnect his guests with the source of all good eating and fine dining, foothills style, and introduce them to his version of the farm-to-table movement.

Again, the wealthy are seeking what the good earth of Southern Appalachia offers: water, beauty, mountains, music, heritage, and soil. Fortunately for those of us who are not among the wealthy or the elite, most of those things are, ironically, free. ❖

Elizabeth Sims has lived in Asheville, North Carolina, since 1986. She is vice president of marketing communications for Biltmore and serves on the boards of the Asheville Area Habitat for Humanity and the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority. She is past president of the Southern Foodways Alliance. She has written for *Southern Living, National Geographic Traveler, WNC Magazine,* and numerous daily newspapers.

IS PITTSBURGH APPALACHIA?

By MIRIAM RUBIN

Is Pittsburgh a part of Appalachia? There are many reasons why it does not fit the Appalachian stereotype. It is not rural. It has a multi-cultural community and attracts a world of immigrants. It has top-notch hospitals and a famous transplant center. Its well-regarded cultural institutions include a symphony orchestra with a roster of renowned conductors, a ballet company, and an opera company, all performing in gleaming, ornate halls. The city also boasts great universities, a young mayor, wonderful museums, and paved roads.

Yet according to the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC), Pittsburgh is absolutely part of Appalachia. ARC was created in 1965 by an act of Congress. A "federal-state partnership," ARC defined and mapped a region it called Appalachia, following the backbone of the Appalachian Mountains. The region stretches north to southern New York State and south to Mississippi. Pittsburgh and most of Pennsylvania are clearly within the region's borders.

This notion was not universally accepted. One Pittsburgh friend went so far as to remark, "No, good grief! Pittsburgh is a good city, sophisticated and competitive."

In fact, according to the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, "Many inhabitants of Pennsylvania and New York were surprised to learn that the government in D.C. considered them Appalachian, and some were very opposed to the idea."

Nanette Miller is an example of such an opponent. Miller lives just south of Pittsburgh and has worked for a coal company for many years. Her ancestors can be traced to the forests of Elk County, in northwestern Pennsylvania. Though she doesn't consider herself to be an Appalachian, she agreed that Pittsburgh might be within the boundaries of Appalachia.

"But Pittsburgh is urban," Miller said. "It's an amalgam of people of many cultures with urban-type crime, drugs, cultural organizations, and commerce. Say the word 'Appalachian' to most people and they think

Photomontage by Samuel Crowe.

of banjoes and mountains and bluegrass music and simple country ways. Say 'Pittsburgh' and people think of steel mills and the Steelers."

Margaret Moran also strongly objects to the idea of Pittsburgh as Appalachia. Raised in Pittsburgh, she now lives in rural southwestern Pennsylvania. Moran and her husband, Dennis, own a design business. Her reaction, she admits, was influenced by the negative stereotype of people from Appalachia. "I guess I like to consider that I came from a metropolitan place."

By sharp contrast, city native Patricia Lowry, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* architecture critic, remarked, "I've always considered Pittsburgh the capital of Appalachia. We're connected through our industry, too–coal barges still ply our rivers, and the coal that comes from the Appalachian mountains and those rivers is part of the Appalachian watershed." Unlike some of the previous commentators, I have no doubt that the place I now call home is Appalachia.

Nearly twelve years ago, I married and moved from New York City to live with my husband in an 1830s log cabin, nestled in the very southwest corner of Pennsylvania. No one would argue that the place we live is not Appalachia—a place where people say "holler" and not when they're trying to get you to come in for dinner.

With views for miles, we are perched in the center of a steep, wooded ridgetop. Our roads are carved from muddy, sticky, red clay with SUV-breaking ruts. Neighbors farm and raise goats, chickens, and cattle. The county in which we live is one of the poorest and least populated in the state. Rough and beautiful, wild and serene, our land is a sanctuary where we observe nature and its changes, captured by my husband in his landscape paintings and prints. Our corner of the world is populated more by deer than people.

Here we know we are lucky to have a tiny post office in the center of the village, which is really just one road. There are only two other businesses—a convenience store that sells gas, milk, and biscuits with sausage gravy and the car repair garage, where just a few years back, while your car was being inspected, you could also get a haircut or a manicure.

If our part of southwestern Pennsylvania with its deer and mud, gardens and groundhogs, frogs singing in the pond and croaking from the trees is Appalachia, then how can Pittsburgh be thought of in the same way? Pittsburgh—the (now) sparkling city with the three rivers, the point of land, and the graceful bridges. Is it an economic label? For instance, not long ago, Pittsburgh, along with some surrounding counties, was declared "distressed."

Can a city known as the "capital of nineteenth-century industrial transformation" be considered part of a region renowned for its "mountain ways"? Or maybe, as I read in the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, "the [Appalachian] region, long characterized by a single stereotype, is actually almost too diverse to generalize about at all." Just because the Appalachian Regional Commission includes it in the thirteen-state region, does that mean that it is Appalachian?

"Yes, without question," said Dr. Doris Dyen, a public folklorist with a doctorate in ethnomusicology. Dyen is the cultural programs administrator for the Rivers of Steel Heritage Area, whose mission is to document and preserve the steel and steel-related industrial and cultural resources of southwestern Pennsylvania. The Heritage Area is supermobilized this year, along with other civic organizations planning events celebrating the 250th anniversary of the naming of Pittsburgh.

"I've always considered Pittsburgh the capital of Appalachia..."

On a sunny and cold March morning, I visited the Rivers of Steel offices to talk with Dyen and her colleague Julie A. Throckmorton-Meunier, the group's cultural resources specialist. Rivers of Steel is located in a restored historic building in Homestead, once a booming steel mill area of Pittsburgh. Today, only the smokestacks remain.

"Pittsburgh is the northernmost large city in Appalachia," said Dyen. "There are geographical, botanical, economic, social, historical, and industrial reasons why it is Appalachian."

Another expert in the field, Dr. Richard Wissolik, commented: "Pittsburgh is absolutely within the northern Appalachian area." Wissolik is director of the Saint Vincent College Center for Northern Appalachian Studies in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. "Northern Appalachia runs all the way to Nova Scotia," he explained. "It is distinct from southern

Appalachia and does not fit images normally associated with southern Appalachia and its rural stereotypes. It is ethnically diverse, industrialized (coal, steel, and rail) as well as rural."

According to ARC, these days more than half of all Appalachians live in urban areas instead of on farms or tucked into mountainsides. Pittsburgh is urban Appalachia, located in Appalachia's northern subregion. The southern portion, below the Mason-Dixon line, is closer to the cultural ideal of mountaineers and myths. The *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* describes the southern portion as its core region, "where the affinity of history, culture, the economy, and the mountain land is strongest." But the rural nature of that area is changing.

"In a sense," Dr. Dyen said, "Pennsylvania is two states: eastern and western. The western part is Appalachia." She went on to explain that Pittsburgh is the confluence of many factors. Even the trees found there are a mixture of types that grow both farther north and farther south, hardwoods and softwoods. Early on, settlers used these trees for their log cabins, the typical architecture of the Appalachians.

Early Migration

Pittsburgh is a great melting pot of people, explained Dyen. "Settlement patterns usually move from east to west, and some migration into Pittsburgh happened that way, but here a lot of the settlement took place from the south. People came up from West Virginia, from western Maryland, bringing with them the culture and the customs of their folks. They were following the mountains and the mountain valleys."

Other settlers were the English and Scots-Irish, the primary tie to the Appalachian area, plus the German Protestants, until about the 1820s and 1830s. "Then German Catholics and Irish Catholics," Dyen added. "In general, the Irish Catholics came because of the potato famine and German Catholics because of the endless wars in Middle Europe. People didn't just come for religious freedom. Just as many came because they needed work, or there was no land back home, or both."

In the mid- and late-nineteenth century, Pittsburgh was a booming industrial city with busy mines, mills, and factories which produced coal, coke, steel, and glass. New immigrants included Poles, Hungarians, Italians, Greeks, Slovaks, and eastern European Jews. After WWI, the federal government imposed quotas on eastern and southern European immigration. But, as Dyen explained, "That didn't stop the need for workers in industries here. That's when whites and African Americans came up from other Appalachian states into Pittsburgh.

"Companies would also import workers to break up strikes, and often they were black. However, there are a number of very old black communities in Pittsburgh that date back to pre-Civil war time."

Sometimes steel workers traveled north from Birmingham, Alabama, a city that became known as the Pittsburgh of the South. "Birmingham is the southern anchor of Appalachia, just as Pittsburgh is its northern anchor," said Dyen. "When the mills shut down in Pittsburgh in the late 1970s, early 1980s, some workers moved south to work in steel mills there. Essentially, it is the economics of coal and steel in the Appalachian corridor that unifies it." Pittsburgh played the starring role.

It's Really All About the Coal

Around Pittsburgh they call it King Coal. There are parades, pageants, and coal queens. My husband's father and his grandfather mined coal. Like many others, as a young man, my husband's paternal grandfather was recruited from his native Ukraine to work in the coalfields of southwestern Pennsylvania.

Coal was mined from under Pittsburgh and the surrounding areas. It was processed sometimes right on the waterfront then put directly into barges to be shipped on the rivers. Coal was shipped into Pittsburgh as well. Coal barges came up from West Virginia, traveling north on the Monongahela (Mon) River. The Mon, which flows north from the Allegheny Mountains of West Virginia, became the main artery for coal transport. Coal was used to fire the mills that made steel. The steel, like the coal, was shipped everywhere in the States by rail or from the rivers of the Port of Pittsburgh.

"There are pictures of Pittsburgh from around 1900 showing where you could have walked across the Mon river from coal barge to coal barge," marveled Dyen. "Before

they used coal in the steel mills, they fired them up with lumber from the forests. The earliest iron works were actually called Iron Plantations."

In a 2006 interview in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, the late Rudy Abramson, co-editor of the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, said, "Pittsburgh is more a part of the region than people think. It was the steel industry and Pittsburgh banks that played such an overarching role in the exploitation of the timber and coal down in West Virginia and eastern Kentucky."

The Past Continues

"The overarching, negative stereotypes of Appalachian people were created and fueled by popular culture," said Dyen. "These stereotypes probably stem from the 1930s, because there was so much photography done then to try and document the admittedly terrible conditions that some people in Appalachia lived under. These very conditions were caused by the coal companies. They were denuding forests; they were strip-mining, polluting rivers."

Today, they are cutting the tops off mountains and my own ridgetop is being threatened by long-wall mining and gas exploration.

A City of Neighborhoods, Some of Which You'll Never Find

According to a Pittsburgh entry in the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia*, "Between 1860 and 1920 the city's population grew more than twelvefold, giving it an enduring personality as an international city characterized by tight, ethnically-oriented neighborhoods."

That flavor remains today. Many neighborhoods are still ethnic enclaves: Squirrel Hill, which is Jewish; Polish Hill; and the North Side, a German community. The hills, valleys, and mountains of Pittsburgh had a great deal to do with shaping its various neighborhoods.

"Look at our topography," said Patricia Lowry. "This isn't Kansas. Pittsburgh is a very hilly city, which gives a distinct character not only to the landscape but to the people as well. It's a very clannish, neighborhood-oriented place. I'm still discovering hidden valleys where people live quite isolated from the rest of the city—places like Duck Hollow, where there's maybe seventeen houses in this tiny valley right along the Monongahela River, and great blue herons land on the bank. That's a very Appalachian thing."

Dyen described a neighborhood called Panther Hollow, tucked into the midst of urban bustle. "It's a whole little Italian community in that valley. Those people stay to themselves. Their social world is in that hollow."

Others find a rural, folksy place disguised as a city. "Pittsburgh is an island of urbania in the rolling foothills of the Appalachian mountains," said Pete Zapadka, online editor for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. "Within the borders of the city, you can find pockets of Appalachia. There are areas where there are deep valleys along streams that plunge to the Ohio River. One can stand, look around, and be convinced that the area is rural."

Bob Batz Jr., food editor of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, hails from Dayton, Ohio, an area "considered to be on the fringe of Appalachia." He has great admiration for his adopted city. "You don't have to travel far from the city center . . . to feel that you're truly in Appalachia, whether because of the natural topography, or the manmade one that too often includes coal mines and piles of mine waste—'Red Dog,' as folks know it. I love the Appalachian aspects of Pittsburgh, especially the winding skinny roads that lead to backwoodsesque shacks that cling precariously to mined-out hills—often in view of downtown's shining skyline, which is another lovely aspect of Pittsburgh."

Cultural Ties

In Pittsburgh, the primary ties to Appalachian culture are the Scots-Irish immigrants, the first Europeans to arrive in large numbers. It's from them that many traditions stem, including music and storytelling. "Pittsburghese," a dialect unique to the area, has been traced to Sctots-Irish and English influences.

Dr. Barbara Johnstone, a linguistics and rhetoric professor at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University, maintains a wonderful website of history, definitions, and podcasts about Pittsburghese: http://english.cmu.edu/pittsburghspeech/index.html. Arguably the most famous example of this dialect, with a direct link to Scots-Irish, is the word "yinz," a plural of you.

From the website: "Among the many words and structures used [in Pittsburgh] that are Scots-Irish are

'redd up' [to clean or tidy; the late Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy declared an area-wide Redd Up Day]; 'nebby' [nosy]; "slippy" [for slick surfaces]; and 'diamond' for a town square."

Pittsburgh boasts many old-time and bluegrass music organizations. These include Calliope, a folk music society that teaches and organizes concerts of heritage-based music, and the Pittsburgh Banjo Club. The Coal County Cloggers and the Country Song and Dance Society of Pittsburgh also embrace and identify with Appalachian music and culture.

When they settled the area, the Scots-Irish brought the Presbyterian religion. However, it is important to note that Pittsburgh is home to some 127 different nationalities and many different religions. "And new folks are still coming in," said Dyen.

How People Identify

Do people in Pittsburgh know they are living in Appalachia? "The name 'Appalachia' is pretty recent in terms of people thinking about it as a region," said Dyen. "We've had 300 years of history before that when people were not saying 'Appalachia' or identifying themselves as such. Instead you were from West Virginia or from your little town in Kentucky. There is a difference between the way people self-identify and the way the world, or scholars, or folks looking at the culture see it. It's one thing to have a particular region labeled by someone from the outside. It's another thing to consider how people identify themselves."

"If your family was Slovak and your ancestors came here in 1910, and you always worked in one of the steel mills, until they went down, and your generation has gone to college, most likely you'd be working as an accountant or you'd own a shop. But you probably would not think about being Appalachian," said Dyen.

On the other hand, Julie Throckmorton-Meunier's whole family considers themselves Appalachian. She is thirty-one and lives in Pittsburgh but was raised in Ambridge, Pennsylvania, a river town sixteen miles northwest of the city. "The English-Irish side of my family can trace their history here back pre-1900. My grandfather played the spoons and he was a country doctor. There were a lot of these old-timey things. My father ate lard on bread sprinkled with sugar. He loves pickled pigs' feet. They still sell those in the grocery stores around here."

"While I am indigenous to western Pennsylvania, I've never considered myself an Appalachian," said Pete Zapadka. "I've called myself a country boy living and working in the big city. The term 'Appalachian' would probably apply more, in my mind, to someone living in the deeper area of Appalachia. Yet I probably should embrace being an Appalachian. Who wouldn't enjoy being associated with the oldest mountain range in the world?"

Says Patricia Lowry, "Culturally we are very tied to the Appalachians, through our religion and traditional music and dance and dialect—the fiddling and bagpiping, the clogging and country dancing, and 'yinz'ing. The much-maligned 'yinz' is a derivation of a perfectly acceptable Scots-Irish contraction, 'you'uns'.

"Am I an Appalachian?" asks Lowry. "Sure. More than half of my ancestors came from Ireland, Scotland, and England. I remember as a child growing up going to my Aunt Dorothy and Uncle Richard's house in the country, where they would roll up the living room rug, break out the fiddles and banjos and guitars, and start square-dancing. I wouldn't have called that Appalachian back then, but I do now. It's in my blood." ❖

A 1976 graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Miriam Rubin was the first female cook at the Four Seasons Restaurant in New York City. She contributes food features to the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and writes for the Pittsburgh-based lifestyle magazine, *Table*.

Mountainbound

By MICHAEL DOWDY

Tonight my father and I
speak of money,
of my truck he sold
now that I live in Brooklyn
where cars are ornaments
for orange envelopes.
He's lived in Appalachia
his full fifty-seven years,
his voice thick with hills,
airy with wind
blowing through hollers.
My truck sold for $2,000
and I'm saved
from bar tabs
that grow like kudzu
on my writer's desk.
His voice shakes as he speaks.
We head to Europe soon,
his first trip abroad.
We'll see Paris and London
with my girlfriend
who's teaching him French,
which he speaks in giggles
and mountain drawl.
I will play tour guide,
he the silent type, wide-eyed,
drunk with the unknown.
I think of Wordsworth,
who spoke of children and men,
and perhaps in Saint Germain
between bottles of wine
I too will mispronounce,
I may whisper in his ear
what I cannot speak aloud.

Michael Dowdy grew up in the mountains of western Virginia. He received his Ph.D. in English from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and currently teaches American literature at Hunter College in New York City. A chapbook of his poems, *The Coriolis Effect,* was published in 2007 by Bright Hill Press.

PUBLIC ART HELPS OHIO TOWN RE-IMAGINE FUTURE

By BRIAN E. MILLER

When the Park Hotel burned to the ground, it left a gaping hole in a row of mostly brick buildings on the town square of Coshocton, a small Ohio town in a farming region east of Columbus.

For the next two years, the lot was forbidden territory. Passers-by were blocked from it by concrete barriers placed there by the out-of-town property owner.

Then one July day, a backhoe pushed aside the huge concrete barriers, opening the lot to anyone who wanted to walk in.

The fire wiped out an important part of the town's legacy at a point when the past seemed shakier and shakier as a foundation for a slipping economy built on manufacturing.

Michigan-born artist Steven Brown grasped the empty lot's importance as a focal point in the town's future and made it the centerpiece for a month-long art residency to inspire new thinking about Coshocton's economic future.

With the support of the director of the local arts center, Brown, who was born in Flint, Michigan, and attended the College for Creative Studies in Detroit, executed a series of art projects centering on the burned-out hotel lot.

Brown says the point of his residency, called [COSHOCTON], was to open peoples' imaginations and start them thinking and talking about the town's future.

"Peoples' ideas of the future are very traditional and conservative," he said. "It's not a negative. But it shows there are not many ideas on what to do. There is an interest in problem-solving. One of the barriers is

Removing concrete barriers was the first step to opening the Park Hotel lot to the public. Photo courtesy Anne Cornell.

imagination. But that is one of my strengths."

He says art's contribution to a problem is its playfulness, its ability to touch on a forbidding situation more lightly than economic analysis or urban planning.

Brown said the concrete barriers, by physically barring people from entering, kept them from thinking about the lot's potential uses.

Taking advantage of the open lot, Brown spray-painted lines showing the two uses most often talked about for lot: a parking lot and a park.

"There was no way to address the issue (of the future use of the lot)," said Brown during an interview on palettes strung together in the lot to form a meeting place and at times an outdoor office for his residency. "Closing off the lot was a huge blight to the center of town."

From about 1830 on, Coshocton was a dynamo among Ohio cities, its economy driven first by boats on the Ohio-Erie Canal and later by the railroads that shipped its coal and paper.

But in the last few decades, competition from the global economy has shuttered a number of factories, eroded the tax base, and sucked the vitality from its downtown.

Not surprisingly, the community (population, 12,000) has drawn up economic growth strategies and brought in consultants to brainstorm the prospects for growth and jobs.

An art project didn't figure in either set of plans, but the arts center director, Anne Cornell, became passionate about the potential for an outside artist helping people imagine something better.

"The outsider aspect gives the sense to the community that it can talk and look at itself in a different way," she said.

"Closing off the lot was a huge blight to the center of town."

[COSHOCTON] consisted of a diffuse set of twelve to fourteen individual actions or projects that engaged the public, all organized around the theme of Coshocton's future.

Some were artistic, some recreational, some social, and some related to re-making the hotel lot into a center (that Brown dryly dubbed Dead Center Stage) for re-imagining the community's future. But all were built around engaging people, which has been the hallmark of public art since it began during the feminist and civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Collaboration and community-building have been the objects of other public art projects. In the late 1980s, Los Angeles artist Judy Baca painted a mural intended to clean up a plaza plagued by vandalism in the southern California town of Guadalupe. Made of panels tracing the history of the largely Mexican American farming community, it became a rallying point, boosting community pride and encouraging tolerance among different ethnic groups.

"I believe public art is about inspiring," Baca told one writer. "If you just go to people and give them something or make something for them, you have much less of a dialogue or a participatory public art project."

For the Coshocton Canal Quilters, the idea of making a quilt inspired by a hotel fire was "a new vein", said Cornell. But the historical aspect made sense to them and they dove into the project, said one quilter, Helen Moody.

The images on the pieces of quilt were from photos of charred beams and burnt tiles and from wallpaper saved from the flames.

The quilt became a lively topic of discussion at club quilting sessions, said Moody. "Anne (Cornell) was in and out; Steven (Brown) was in and out," she said. "Club members were in and out and everybody had a different idea. We would sew a little and rip out a little bit. If somebody didn't like it we would try it again."

The painting of pallets that formed walkways in the lot became a canvass for re-imagining of the fire. Brown directed three high-school students in how to use paint color to recreate the falling of the floors and the scorching of the walls.

One of the students, KaLyn Markley, sixteen, said she was enthralled. "We mixed paints to get this or that effect," she said. "I thought it was awesome how it turned out."

A twenty-six-year-old master of fine arts candidate at the Bauhaus Universität-Weimar in Germany, Brown has embraced public art

because of its accessibility. Calling galleries and museums privileged spaces in which the artist's point of view is dominant, he said art should be two-sided. In public art, "The artist is answering questions people are asking."

While Brown has come to embrace public art, he has also worked in a number of media, including painting and sculpture. Many of his works have a certain improvisational quality, but they also project the deep conviction that goes with his role as a social activist. Once he traveled around to rural dumpsites and painted while in the back of a pickup truck.

The seeds of [COSHOCTON] were sown while Brown was an Allesee Fellow with Arttrain, a traveling program to engage communities in the arts. The program made a stop in Coshocton. As part of Arttrain's community outreach, Brown worked with local youth on a sculpture and developed a working relationship with Cornell. They shared a common philosophy about art and together began envisioning a collaborative project centered on Coshocton's struggle to find a new economic direction.

Brown has played on economic questions with his art before. Two of the Arttrain projects on which he collaborated were springboards for directing local attention to economic questions.

In Ludington, Michigan, he and another intern, Abby Maier, drew attention to an abandoned, neglected train depot. Once a hub for the local concrete industry, it had fallen into neglect, and changing times had erased peoples' memory of concrete.

With local residents as collaborators, Brown and Maier festooned the walls of the station with plastic bags filled with sand and water, the essential ingredients of concrete.

Similarly, at a stop in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, a proposed sculpture was supposed to jolt the public to the realization that agriculture, and not the famous Civil War battlefield, was the bedrock, at least historically, of the community. "People didn't settle there to have a battlefield," Brown said. "They settled to grow apples and cherries." Brown had become in effect a truth-telling outsider, rediscovering the essentials of a local culture, capturing what he felt was of value and giving it prominence.

But in a recent project in Jena, Germany, he put aside any commentary on what seems his most open-ended project, one of nineteen public art projects by Weimar students playing on the theme of light. Brown tended a hearth fire in the main public square on ten consecutive nights in the dead of winter.

Attracted by the cozy warmth, people came by for conversation while pieces of fireproof glass under the fire recorded a "pyrograph."

As much as the project had a conceptual underpinning, it was the magic of the fire as a way to bring people together that resonated in Brown's description: "Gather Change Gather."

"By generating this gathering place, by remaining open and patient, I stumbled across something deeply human, something alive and impermanent, something perhaps one cannot seek to find."

In [COCHOSTON], Brown had a decidedly more focused goal: to help people re-imagine their community's future.

For over a month, [COSHOCTON] was not just a project but also his life, as he immersed himself in the details of the different activities related to the residency.

"I threw my all into the project, six weeks of twelve-hour days," he said. "I put myself on the line more or less completely."

Was it a success? "Goals are tricky when it comes to creative arts," said Brown, but he added, "It did reach a large audience. It created a buzz. I think we really did saturate the market." The single biggest ac-

Dramatic lighting highlighted a reader's theatre piece held at the Park Hotel lot. Photo courtesy Anne Cornell.

complishment was the opening of the hotel lot.

Word about the project got around. Victoria Carpenter, a forty-six-year-old longtime resident who has worked as an on-call housekeeper in a hotel, said she had not heard about the project before being told by a reporter. But she had a good idea of what might fit well in the hotel lot: a park with a fountain. "The water would change color at nighttime," she said.

Christy Farnbauch, a consultant brought in to explore how Coshocton could use arts and tourism as an economic engine, said Brown's residency helped open peoples' minds to new ways of economic recovery and gave them ideas on how they might do things differently. "They can get the old baggage out in a non-confrontational way," she said.

The final act of the residency was the recitation of a script by Brown, performed in the hotel lot by six community members. The crescent moon rising above the dilapidated brick walls created a setting as dramatic as an opera at the Baths of Cariculla in Rome.

The recitation was a long litany of historical facts, citizen comments, and newspaper excerpts that summed up the community's quandary and hopes for the future. An endless-loop video of faded and ill-kept downtown stores and homes was projected on the wall of an adjacent building. As if the needle of a record were stuck, the present seemed fixed at one point, as if we were prisoners cursed to remain in our places.

While it may not have uncovered any new ground, the recitation "solidified the ideas the audience had about Coshocton," said Holly Downing, one of the performers and a musician who recently moved to Coshocton. "As far as leaning into the future, we can only hope."

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Brian E. Miller lives in one college town in central Ohio (Gambier, home of Kenyon College) and reports for a weekly paper in another (Granville, home of Denison University). While town and gown issues are his weekday staple, he uses weekends to write visual arts reviews for newspapers and magazines on a freelance basis.

REMEMBERING THE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY OF CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

By LINDA LANGE

The rich voice of Bessie Smith rings through the galleries of the Chattanooga African-American Museum. Her face lights up the rooms. It's almost as if she will saunter to the piano and begin a show. Photographs depict a glamorous star, one that became known as the "Empress of the Blues."

The museum and the 264-seat performance venue, Bessie Smith Hall, are located by a street corner where Smith used to sing for nickels and dimes. She lived in a dirt-floor shack, but she dreamed of a greater life as a blues singer.

"She sang at juke joints up and down the street. She goes to Ma Rainey's revue and wins the seventy-five-dollar prize. Bessie was twelve years old," says museum guide Joyce Terrell. "Ma Rainey groomed her, trained her, and gave her stage presence."

The young singer gained fame as she performed in saloons and small theaters. "She left Ma Rainey because she wasn't paid right. She started her own revue. The rest is truly history," says Terrell.

The Chattanooga native landed a contract with Columbia Records and recorded the hits "Down Hearted Blues" and "Gulf Coast Blues," followed by "Jealous Hearted Blues," "Jailhouse Blues," and "Cold in Hand Blues." She toured with Louis Armstrong and many others and appeared in the 1929 film *St. Louis Blues*. In 1935 she sang at the Apollo Theater in Harlem. At the height of her career, she was the highest paid black singer in America, boasting an income of more than $2,000 a week. Her international reputation focused a world audience on American black music.

The singer died in 1937, but she left an indelible mark on music and her hometown. The Bessie Smith Strut, a barbecue and blues component of Riverbend Festival, is considered the largest block party in the South. More than 40,000 people attend the annual June event.

"We have a lot of visitors from Europe. They are fascinated by the blues, the culture, and Bessie Smith. They have such a passion and will literally stay hours and hours," says Rose M. Martin, executive director of the museum. Neon lights shine on oversized pictures and performance posters of the effervescent singer. People feel her charm and

Bessie Smith with feather plumes. Photo by Carl Van Vechten, 1936.

allure as they gaze at her bejeweled evening gown.

Understanding the Past

The museum uses Smith's celebrity status to bring people to its galleries and show the many aspects of Chattanooga's African American history and culture. Glass display cases hold African wooden masks, weapons, and figures embellished with beads and shells. In the Africa section, a bushman's hut with animal skins and a facade of a city dwelling connect viewers to the origins of black heritage. Murals depict the era of slavery. Artifacts such as wash pots and iron kettles tell of tasks done by slaves.

Museum-goers circulate through galleries that highlight the achievements of the Chattanooga black community. A setting shows a middle-class parlor where family members established close-knit bonds. Photographs reveal educators, ministers, sports figures, political leaders, military heroes, entertainers, and businessmen. In the Dreams Unrealized area, citizens fighting to end segregation are featured. Multimedia presentations play in the main gallery. The museum is visited by 36,000 people a year.

"Chattanooga is blessed to have such significant contributions by African Americans. I don't think that it is unusual. In most cities and towns there are African Americans who have made significant contributions in terms of economic development, educational development, civil rights, arts, culture, and politics. The unique thing about Chattanooga is that there was a group of African Americans who had the commitment to develop the whole documentation process," says Martin.

Founded in 1983, the museum has emphasized history in a city with a rich spectrum of African American achievements. Martin, who took over the helm in September 2007, intends to broaden the museum's scope. "The museum can also assume a leadership role in bringing high-quality arts programming," says Martin.

Heritage Sites

The Chattanooga Regional History Museum also keeps alive the heritage of the African American community. Situated downtown on Chestnut Street, the museum is in a transitional phase while new facilities are under development. Its collection of 3,500 objects is not on view in galleries at this time. "We have a large photo collection that includes African American founders and businessmen, and Civil Rights pictures," says Brittany Westbrook, collections/research manager.

Museum curator Daryl Black refers to the Civil War period in explaining the roots of Chattanooga's African-American history. "The Union Army took over fairly early in the Civil War. Large concentrations of freed people or slaves fleeing their masters arrived in Chattanooga. Some joined the Union Army. Four regiments served during the occupation," he says. Members of the U.S. Colored Troops guarded railroads and supply depots. He tells of Hubbard Pryor, a runaway slave from northwest Georgia who enlisted in the 44th Regiment. He served in the Chattanooga area and was in Dalton, Georgia, in late 1864 when the Confederate Army invaded Union forces in Tennessee. He was captured and sent back to his master. "The black soldiers were not treated as prisoners of war, but as 'property,'" he explains. The Chattanooga National Cemetery includes the marked graves of 148 black Civil War soldiers.

During the final days of the Civil War and in the years immediately following the war, Chattanooga continued to draw former slaves. "A large number gathered on the north shore and formed Camp Contraband," Black explains. The Freedmen's Bureau built schools. The Rev. E.O. Tate, a black minister, founded a church about 1865 that grew to be Howard School. It became the first free public school in Hamilton County and served black and white students. Tate was Hamilton County's first superintendent of education.

From this community, a substantial black population grew and fostered several business districts and neighborhoods. The newcomers included Randolph M. Miller, a former slave who arrived with Gen. William T. Sherman's army in 1864. Later he was a pressman with the Daily Times and then launched a weekly newspaper for the black community. Mary Walker, a former slave from Alabama, and William "Uncle Bill" Lewis, a former slave from Winchester and a blacksmith, were two of many new residents who established roots in Chattanooga. Dr. Emma Rochelle Wheeler owned and operated Walden Hospital, a facility that also

had a nursing school. Visitors can see the three-story brick structure near the campus of the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga. Historical markers for Walker, Lewis, and others are posted on downtown sidewalks. The First Baptist Church on East Eighth Street was organized in 1866 by former slaves. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Eighth Street also has an historical marker for Roland Hayes, a principal soloist with the Fisk Jubilee Singers. In 1923, he was the first black classical singer to perform at the revered Carnegie Hall.

Many buildings of historical significance in Chattanooga have been torn down. The Martin Hotel opened in 1924 with fifty rooms. It was the largest African-American hotel in the South and hosted entertainers such as Ella Fitzgerald, Fats Domino, Mahalia Jackson, Lena Horne, and Nat "King" Cole. The site on East Martin Luther King Boulevard is now the location of the Chattanooga African-American Museum.

MacLellan Island in the heart of Chattanooga was once a hideaway for runaway slaves, according to local lore. Booker T. Washington State Park located north of Chattanooga on the Chickamauga Reservoir was constructed in 1939 by an all-black group of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The 350-acre property was one of the first state parks in Tennessee. ❖

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Linda Lange is a feature writer for the *Knoxville News-Sentinel*.

MOUNTAIN MAMA

By SARAH ANNE LOUDIN THOMAS

There is truth in the trailer park
and honesty in the car on blocks.

Starvin' Marvin and "as seen on TV"
live cheek by jowl with the likes
of handmade quilts and apple butter,
old-time music and the oral tradition.
Some folks say it isn't True,
isn't the way things used to be.
But lose a grandfather to the coalmines,
an uncle to the war, your mother
to a cancer that gnaws at her soul—
lose a child for no reason you can see.
Then you'll find the fragile beauty
in the never-ending yard sale.
You'll learn to love the tourists
who buy corncob pipes, coonskin caps,
lumps of coal carved like bears.

When the giant timber companies
run the local sawmill out of money,
Aunt Eunice can't remember your name,
your best friend moves to California
and minimum wage is doing alright, man—
Then you'll find the potent wisdom
in workers' compensation, food stamps
and tonight's lotto number—
dear God let me win.
A one-in-a-billion chance is better
than watching the land your ancestors cleared
wash away on the word of strip mines
and a future somewhere past the county line.

At night, the lights from Wal-Mart glow
like the promise of a better tomorrow.

Sarah Anne Loudin Thomas is a native of French Creek, West Virginia, who now lives in Asheville, North Carolina. She is director of development and public relations at Presbyterian Home for Children in Black Mountain, North Carolina.

WILD IRIS

By KATHERINE SMITH

We walked beside the river chanting names–
dogwood, redbud, jack-in-the-pulpit,
wild iris, bleeding heart. Stems swayed in drizzle,
in soaked moss at roots of faint-leafed river birches
on banks of the Tennessee. From the other side

whiff of cow pasture, fog from the factory
swirled downstream. From the road, red clay,
black smoke from cars where Chapman
Highway crosses Henley Street Bridge.
Crossing the viaduct from Kentucky

into dilapidated downtown Knoxville,1963,
driving past Harold's deli with my parents,
I cried, my mother tells me, almost as hard
as my grandfather who lived in mourning
half his life for my grandmother, the vanished
Carpathian ghetto of his teens; half for his only son
gone to teach mathematics in Tennessee.

I've come home to this city that never made much sense
to my grandparents, from up North, from a city
that taught me more about loneliness than I ever wanted
to know. Kneeling by the river to examine two species
of wild iris, one tiny and blue, the other pristine white,
I asked "What if I only feel alive in this valley?" You shrugged,

your family in East Tennessee, in poverty
since the nineteenth century. Together,
we inhaled the river, which, even polluted,
comforts us, ache for our home, this scarred earth
that made my grandfather weep with loneliness.

Katherine Smith's work has appeared or is forthcoming in a number of journals, including *Fiction International, Poetry, The Southern Review, Appalachian Heritage, Atlanta Review*, and the *Louisville Review.* Her first book, *Argument by Design,* (2003), won the Washington Writers' Publishing House Poetry Prize. A Tennessean, she currently works at Montgomery College in Germantown, Maryland.

MUSIC FOR THE MASSES:
The Flourishing of Symphony Orchestras in Appalachia

By NANCY JANE EARNEST

Someone who lives outside Appalachia may mistakenly think of this mountainous, multi-state area and its people strictly in terms of cabins, coal mines, corn whiskey, and country music. History and demographics have identified us, but our aesthetic experiences define us.

I think one of the best indicators of the cultural climate of a region is the presence of classical music. I use the term "cultural" not in an elitist sense but to emphasize an atmosphere in which the population has become exposed to, educated by, and ultimately shaped by an appreciation for something slightly out of and beyond the ordinary.

Through large professional orchestras such as the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra with a budget in the millions of dollars to small community orchestras that depend on volunteer musicians, Appalachia makes

Symphony of the Mountains conductor Cornelia Kodkani-Laemmli in action. Photo courtesy Josef Willis.

symphonic music available and attractive to the masses—and its popularity is growing steadily.

Grant Cooper, artistic director and conductor of the West Virginia Symphony Orchestra, a professional organization based in Charleston, offers a possible explanation for non-urban populations embracing classical music. "Classical (or concert) music requires active listening and concentration. This music relies on the use of imagination—on the construction of fantastic realities based on non-visual stimulus and experience. It is very possible that non-urban environments are more conducive to developing folks whose willingness (and, to a lesser extent, ability) to surrender to their imaginations is more natural.

"The West Virginia Symphony routinely draws over 2,000 people to its performances. That represents about one percent of our entire metropolitan area's population. If we were to compare ourselves to a major metropolitan area where we accept that 'classical music is flourishing,' the results are quite amazing. Let's take New York City, with a metro population of around ten million. If the New York Philharmonic were to draw one percent of the metro population, they would be playing to audiences totaling over 100,000 people at each and every concert they gave. They would have to give each concert more than thirty times. They also have an enormous influx of visitors to the city who attend the orchestra as 'bonus patrons,' as it were. Cities in Appalachia do not have nearly so many convention visitors and must rely more on the base population."

How, then, are symphony orchestras becoming more attractive to this base population? Educational programming for younger audiences is one way. The Symphony of the Mountains, established in 1946, is a regional professional orchestra that serves East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia. SOTM launched its Education in the Schools Outreach Program in the mid-1980s. The Symphony of the Mountains Youth Orchestra dates back to 1965. The Johnson City Symphony Orchestra, also in East Tennessee, offers annual concerts for young students free of charge. When students are exposed to classical music, whether through local symphony performances or through ever-popular school band and orchestra programs, they continue to participate in musical events as part of a supporting audience or even as performers. They also bring their parents along.

Schery Collins, a flutist with over forty years of combined membership in the Symphony of the Mountains and the Johnson City Symphony Orchestra, came to symphonic music through home training by her father, who also took his family to the local community concert series. Collins is a prime example of the benefits of childhood exposure to good music. "It is so rewarding to have music, which I love dearly, as an avocation. It is one of life's greatest pleasures for me. I think many people in our area are 'hungry' for classical music. It amazes me what wonderful, responsive, enthusiastic audiences we have, time after time. Parents want their children to grow up hearing music the symphony performs. You would not believe how fabulous the local youth symphonies are."

On a larger scale, orchestras affiliated with educational institutions in Appalachia also serve as training grounds for musicians, offering technical instruction and performance opportunities. North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem prepares students at the high-school level for professional careers in musical performance. For over sixty years, Brevard Music Center in North Carolina has taught talented teenagers and young adult students through a rigorous summer program that allows them to play alongside faculty in the Brevard Festival Orchestra. The Sewanee Summer Music Center

in Tennessee also offers a summer training program for advanced music students.

Training aside, people generally appreciate what they know best. Populations other than musicians are being attracted to symphonic performances by targeted programming that offers music with which audiences are most familiar. Symphony of the Mountains recently joined forces with The Charlie Daniels Band in an outdoor festival concert and teamed with the Charles Goodwin Orchestra for an evening of big band music that had the audience dancing in the aisles. A recent summer series of outdoor symphonic concerts was held at the Bristol Motor Speedway, a NASCAR mecca in Tennessee. The Johnson City Symphony Orchestra has featured Edgar Meyer, the leading solo bass player in the world today, and will team with "America's Fiddler," Mark O'Connor, in an upcoming season. Many orchestras attract even more diversified audiences by offering art exhibits in conjunction with concerts.

Swiss-born Cornelia Kodkani-Laemmli, conductor of Symphony of the Mountains, maintains that there is a strong connection between all types of music. "Music can touch our souls, no matter what period it is from or what style it is in. Everybody can like any style of music if it is well played. Then of course we are using the same 'sounds'—whether fiddles or violins—in the orchestra. Music speaks to all of us, no matter what language, religion, country, culture, or area we are from. We somehow understand it, even if we listen to music that does not have its origins where we are from."

What is the future of the symphony orchestra in Appalachia? Grant Cooper makes the observation that most orchestra patrons are age fifty or older. "They always have been, and, as our population ages, I see an ever-increasing demographic of people who want to get away from life being thrown at them and return to a more reflective and less 'bombarded' lifestyle."

If we accept these observations, then the combination of an aging population, targeted programming, and the young, well-trained musicians who are rising in the ranks should continue to make Appalachia's symphony orchestras a vital cultural presence—a joy for those who are willing to participate actively in the listening and keep their imaginations open. ❖

West Virginia Symphony Orchestra. Photo courtesy of Rick Lee.

Nancy Jane Earnest is a product of East Tennessee's school band program and has been a member of the Kingsport Symphony (now Symphony of the Mountains), Johnson City Symphony Orchestra, and other musical performance groups. She founded Woodnote Early Music Ensemble and is a member of the Johnson City Community Concert Band.

AN AFTERNOON WITH KENTON COE

By RANDY SANDERS

"You may remember the famous story about the state dinner given by Edward VII at Buckingham Palace for a visiting oriental dignitary. They were served fresh asparagus, and the potentate simply threw the uneaten stems of the asparagus over his shoulder. Of course, there was a certain restrained shock, but being a gentleman of the first class and not wanting his guest to be embarrassed, King Edward did the same—so the whole dinner party starting throwing the asparagus stems over their shoulders. That's true etiquette."

When I sat down to talk with internationally-known composer Kenton Coe, we did not begin by discussing "etiquette" and "manners." That is where we ended our conversation. Like any good storyteller, Kenton can transport listeners to places yet-visited and people yet-met on a journey as wondrous as the destination.

Although he would likely shudder at the description, Kenton Coe is the personification of urbaneness. Like King Edward, he is the consummate gentleman, and like King Edward, he has met world leaders, luminaries of the arts, and people from many cultures.

A native of Johnson City, Tennessee, Kenton left northeast Tennessee as a young child. His father, a civil engineer, went to work for the Tennessee Valley Authority, and that position took the family to Chattanooga and Knoxville. Kenton began his musical training at the Cadek Conservatory in Chattanooga.

Kenton Coe at his piano.
Photo courtesy Larry Smith, ETSU Photo Lab.

His father's untimely death when Kenton was a teenager resulted in what he described as a "checkered" secondary schooling experience—a sophomore year in Knoxville, a junior year at Sewanee Military Academy, and graduation from Science Hill High School in Johnson City. His undergraduate studies took him to Hobart College in New York before he transferred to and graduated from Yale.

In May of 2007, Kenton gave the afternoon commencement address to East Tennessee State University's graduating class: "Appalachia and the Blending of Cultures." He recounted in that address what happened to him after graduating from Yale as a music history major:

> I didn't get to my own graduation because I was on an ocean liner headed for France, trying to get there in time for the opening of the American School at Fontainebleau outside Paris. . . .
>
> What I want to talk about today is Appalachia and the sharing of cultures. And I will be brief—as the man in the old *New Yorker* cartoon about to give a speech said spotting a man standing next to him with a raised sledgehammer. . . .
>
> Growing up in East Tennessee, I never fully appreciated the values and legacy the world has given us in this beautiful and challenging area. The beginning of my appreciation for this region, and note, I say Apple-at-cha, and not Apple-lay-cha, came when I first returned to live here some twenty-five years ago.
>
> I had the wonderful and serendipitous opportunity to go to Paris to study music after graduating from college. I went for two months that first summer and stayed four years, thanks to my teacher and the generosity of friends met there who opened my eyes to what seemed a radically different culture. Even when I came back to work in New York for some twenty years, I managed to spend at least part, if not the whole, of the year in Europe. So I can tell you that nothing makes you appreciate your hometown like living away from it.

Whether at home in Tennessee or on the European continent, Kenton's career as a composer has been marked by significant accomplishments. He was, for example, sponsored by Aaron Copland for two fellowships from the MacDowell Colony where he began his first full-length opera, *South*. Premiered by the Opera of Marseilles, a later production of *South* by the Paris Opera included an opening night gala in the presence of President and Madame Pompidou. Kenton's twenty-plus-year collaboration with documentary filmmaker (and fellow Johnson Citian) Ross Spears resulted in an Academy Award nomination in the best feature-length documentary category for the film *Agee*. Other accolades abound, including a composition scholarship named in his honor and an honorary doctorate from ETSU.

I asked Kenton if he remembered anyone from his childhood who seemed "urbane."

"Cousin Gertrude, from Hawkins County, was related to me through my mother's side of the family. These people were very hard-working, very unpretentious. I think people like this had a pride in their cultural development, and being able to talk about something. It seems like that sort of pride is all taken rather lightly these days.

"She was one of the most intelligent women I've ever known. She could quote Shakespeare all day long. She could quote the Bible and poetry with equal ease.

"I was always impressed with her—it just kind of sank in that here was a neat-as-a-pin person, although she was never in silks and the like. She was a wonderful 'plain' cook, but when you had dinner with her, everything was as well-organized as in the best of houses.

"She was, for forty or fifty years, the postmistress of Mooresburg, Tennessee. She was your archetypical country woman. I remember she had gracious manners of receiving—manners that go back to the beginning of the nineteenth century and carry through the Victorian era.

"I think my regrets about social behavior in times past are limited to feeling sorry for kids who haven't had the chance to be bolstered by these rules of conduct. That's what Emily Post says in *Etiquette*. The rules are there just to put everyone at ease, like knowing which fork to use without being embarrassed to ask, as if it made any difference."

> Congratulations to the graduating class on this milestone. I wish you a happy life and the hope that you will follow your dream—and that you will go out and taste the riches of other cultures—and that you will eventually come back home, like Dolly Parton [whom he referenced earlier in his address], and share that dream with your fellow Tennesseans.

Like cousin Gertrude's table setting, Kenton's words are clean, sincere, unpretentious, and sophisticated. It is a joy to be in the presence of such a man—a man who recounts stories that place Hawkins County relatives beside the kings of Europe, and gives both equal dignity. He is also that man who, should the dining experience require, will be the first to throw asparagus over his shoulder. ❖

Photo of Cousin Gertrude courtesy her son, Frank S. Moore.

Randy Sanders is managing editor of *Now & Then*.

EDGAR MEYER: A VERSATILE VIRTUOSO

By WAYNE WINKLER

Although it is a vital element in many forms of music, the bass is not the most glamorous instrument in any ensemble. In classical, pop, jazz, or country music, the bass is often seen as merely part of the rhythm section, essential for keeping the foundation of the music but usually in the background.

Some bassists, however, have demonstrated levels of virtuosity that demand attention and respect. Electric bassists such as James Jamerson, Jaco Pastorius, and Larry Graham have made an indelible mark on pop and jazz music, while acoustic bassists Charlie Haden, Charles Mingus, Jimmy Blanton, and Oscar Pettiford have established impeccable reputations in jazz.

Few bassists—for that matter, few musicians—have demonstrated the versatility and varied approach of Edgar Meyer. He is a difficult musician to categorize; his projects include classical, jazz, bluegrass, and styles that defy description. His 1996 collaboration with violinist/fiddler Mark O'Connor and classical cellist Yo Yo Ma, *Appalachian Waltz*, received wide acclaim for its fusion of

Edgar Meyer with bass.
Photo courtesy Jimmy Ienner, Jr.

traditional Appalachian themes with classical music.

Meyer was in Johnson City, Tennessee, in November of 2007 to perform with the Johnson City Symphony, where he played his own "Concerto" and a concerto by Italian bassist Botticini. Earlier, he spent two weeks on the road with Sam Bush and Jerry Douglas. "We just played our own music," Meyer told Dave Carter, host of *Studio One* on WETS-FM. "We played some bluegrass but not a lot of vocals and not too much traditional music. But anything that has those people on it is going to have the imprint of bluegrass all over it."

I like living with scientists; I like their values. They care about some of the same things I care about.

Appalachian musicians often lean toward country or bluegrass because those styles are so prevalent in the region. Edgar Meyer grew up in a unique part of Appalachia, however: Oak Ridge, Tennessee, the Atomic City, where the materials for the first atomic bomb were developed in the 1940s. The city is still the site of research laboratories operated by the Department of Energy. Located twenty-five miles from Knoxville, Oak Ridge has the fourth largest concentration of people with doctoral degrees in the United States. "It was a nice place to grow up," Meyer recalls. "I like living with scientists; I like their values. They care about some of the same things I care about. They like the arts, they like education—it was a wonderful place to grow up."

Edgar Meyer learned to play the double bass from his father, Edgar Meyer, Sr., who was director of the string orchestra program in the city schools. Son Edgar studied music at Indiana University with noted bassist Stuart Sankey. He won numerous competitions, received an Avery Fisher Career grant, and, in 2000, won the Avery Fisher Award, the first bassist to do so.

From the start, Meyer mixed classical music with the traditional music of Appalachia. He also collaborated with some of the great musicians in both categories. His latest release is a set of live recordings from 2001 to 2003 with banjo virtuoso Bela Fleck. Earlier, Meyer teamed up with Sam Bush and Mike Marshall, along with classical violinist Joshua Bell. The resulting CD, *Short Trip Home* (1999), won a Grammy for Best Classical Crossover album. He has worked with Alison Krauss, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Nickel Creek, and Chris Thile. Meyer is also in great demand as a session bassist for artists ranging from Hank Williams, Jr. to James Taylor to the Indigo Girls.

Referring to his habit of crossing musical genres, Meyer says, "I actually think it's more common on the bass than on some instruments, and, of course, it's more common among the kids these days, too. My own son is fifteen, and he's very involved in a number of things. I think there's room for all sorts. I mean, it's nice if people really focus on a particular way of doing a thing and try to become great at it. But music is very interconnected, and there's a lot to learn from knowing a lot of different aspects of it."

Meyer studied a bit of piano at Indiana University and also knows his way around guitar, banjo, and violin but denies any great skill with them. "I did a record where

I played all the instruments. Some of them I played well, and some of them I just barely played. It was just fun playing them all myself."

The bass Meyer played with the Johnson City Symphony had a special significance for him. "It was the one my father fell in love with in 1958, right before I was born. It's the one he always wanted. He had his eye on it like (Chris) Thile has his eye on (John) Reichmann's mandolin; it's one of those things. A guy owned it whom my dad knew pretty well; he was a schoolteacher like my dad. In 1982 he called up and said he was ready to sell it. I was twenty-three and my dad helped me get it, and it's been my main instrument ever since."

Meyer's latest project, still incomplete at the time of this writing, is a collaboration with Thile. "There's two different things we've got going. We've got a whole audio CD of things that we co-wrote. We also recorded several concerts on video, and some of those are older things. Chris plays mandolin on some pieces I wrote to play with (violinist) Joshua Bell, so he gets a whole different take on those pieces. We played some Bach together and some old pieces of Chris's."

Some consider Meyer to be the best bassist working today, but he doesn't think in those terms. "It's not important whether I'm the best or the worst; it's important that I'm able to keep working hard at what I'm doing, and if I feel good about what it is and I'm able to connect with other people, it's nice if anybody else feels good about it." ❖

Wayne Winkler is manager of radio station WETS-FM on the campus of East Tennessee State University and the music editor of *Now & Then*.

Various Artists
Always Lift Him Up: A Tribute to Blind Alfred Reed
(Proper)

West Virginia singer, songwriter, and fiddler Blind Alfred Reed was one of Ralph Peer's discoveries at his historic 1927 recording session in Bristol, Tennessee—the session that also introduced the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers. Reed was born in Floyd, Virginia, in 1880 and raised in West Virginia. His songs were both progressive and populist ("How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Ties and Live?") and conservative ("Why Do You Bob Your Hair, Girls?"). In this collection of Reed's music, artists such as Tim O'Brien, Little Jimmy Dickens, Todd Burge, Larry Groce, and other fellow West Virginians pay tribute to this pioneering protest singer. As Ry Cooder writes in the liner notes, "From the perspective on modern times, it's a miracle he was recorded at all." Reed's music had been neglected for decades, but early 1960s folkies such as the New Lost City Ramblers resurrected some of it. More recently, Bruce Springsteen covered Reed's "How Can a Poor Man Stand Such Times And Live?" *Always Lift Him Up* is a representative sampling of Reed's work. The songs sound fresh and timely today, signifying that not much has changed since Reed's heyday. Reed died—reportedly of starvation—in 1956. *Always Lift Him Up* is a belated tribute to a unique artist and will help insure that his music will live on. ❖

Levon Helm
Dirt Farmer
(Vanguard)

Levon Helm's work with the seminal Americana group The Band has assured him a prominent place in American musical history as well as a spot in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. But his post-Band work has been spotty. A recent bout with throat cancer threatened to silence this vital artist permanently, but Levon has returned with a vengeance. Aided by his daughter Amy (of Ollabelle fame) and Bob Dylan's longtime multi-instrumentalist Larry Campbell, Levon has returned to his Arkansas Delta roots. His voice isn't quite the same as the one on "The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down," but his phrasing and delivery are as strong as ever. *Dirt Farmer* features traditional songs he learned as a child, as well as covers by Steve Earle, J. B. Lenoir, and Buddy and Julie Miller. The result is an authentic and powerful release that is unmistakably Levon Helm—older, wiser, more weathered, but still an American treasure. ❖

Rhonda Vincent
Good Thing Going
(Rounder)

Rhonda Vincent may be one of the hottest bluegrass acts touring today, but she is an artist who simply cannot be pigeonholed into the bluegrass genre. Bluegrass fans eagerly flock to her high-energy performances, but on her latest release *Good Thing Going*, she incorporates dashes of swing and country. Her outstanding band, The Rage, is augmented by guest artists such as Keith Urban, Jesse McReynolds, Kathy Chiavola, and others, bringing colors and textures that make *Good Thing Going* more than simply a good bluegrass album. The International Bluegrass Music Association has awarded Vincent an unprecedented seven consecutive Female Vocalist of the Year awards, and *Good Thing Going* isn't about to give anyone any second thoughts about whether she deserves them. Her vocal styles range from the tender "I Give All My Love to You" and "The Water Is Wide" to rollicking renditions of "I'm Leaving" and "Hit Parade of Love." Rhonda Vincent certainly has a "Good Thing Going," and fans fervently hope she can keep it so for a long time to come.❖

Gary Hensley Band
Bristol To Memphis
(Garyhensley.com)

The concept of Gary Hensley's latest release is indicated in the title: an imaginary voyage from Bristol in northeast Tennessee to Memphis in the southwest corner of the state. Along the way, Hensley and his band—percussionist Mark Bennett, bassist David Decker, and guitarist Chris Ragel—sample the various sounds of the Volunteer state. One side voyage is contained in the second track, "Exodus North," describing the tales of so many Appalachians who moved north to find work in the 1950s and 1960s. Otherwise, the music stays pretty much within the confines of Tennessee, moving across the state from east to west, with subtle changes in the sound of the journey, finally winding up in Memphis. The final cut, "Christopher's Dance/Cinco de Mayo," acknowledges the changing cultural and musical landscape provided by Hispanic newcomers to the state.❖

EXPLORING APPALACHIA'S INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORES

By Lori Tucker-Sullivan

If anyone tells you culture is lacking in Appalachia, you need only send them to one of the many thriving independent bookstores in the region to prove otherwise.

Independent bookselling is not an easy task. Competition comes in many forms, from big-box chain stores, Internet outlets, and even discount stores like Wal-Mart. In addition, literacy rates are declining, and young peoples' interest in books is low. The future oftentimes seems bleak for bookstores regardless of their location.

But in the midst of all this, several bookstores in Appalachia have become havens for provocative discussion, entertaining events, and celebrations of literature. They have managed not only to stay in business but to become hip and quirky community gathering places with regional and even national reputations. They do this by sharing their love of books, conversation, music, and the region.

This is certainly the case at Malaprop's, perhaps one of the best-known bookstores in the region. Located in Asheville, North Carolina, the store is a destination for locals and tourists alike. Since its opening in 1982, Malaprop's has both benefited from the growth of the area and contributed to the vibrant downtown. Bookstore manager Linda

Chapters Bookshop in Galax, Virginia. Photo courtesy Lori Tucker-Sullivan.

Barrett Knopp believes the store's growth has come from the importance it places on finding books the staff knows will interest customers. Often these are books that can't be found in chain or discount stores.

As bluegrass sounds drift into the store from musicians playing on the sidewalk outside, customers walk past national bestsellers to the store's large regional and local author sections. Supporting local talent is key for many independents, and Knopp feels that Malaprop's "has benefited from the renewed respect for the richness of Appalachian culture." Writers such as Lee Smith and Robert Morgan are customer favorites, but the staff also enjoys contributing to the success of new Southern writers—Tony Earley and Joshilyn Jackson among them—whose books have become popular in the past few years.

The store offers events almost daily, including national authors, writers' groups, and an open mic night for poets called the Poetix Café. Events are geared toward the local community, the nearby academic community, and the wealth of writers who live in the region. The variety of events is a clear indication of the store's cultural fullness: A discussion with the vice president of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals is followed by a reading from a Zen Buddhist priest only weeks before a visit from the actor Mike Farrell, with many local writers in between.

In Charleston, West Virginia, locals frequent Taylor Books, a combination bookstore, coffeehouse, and art gallery in the heart of town. Along with books, music, and gifts, the cozy space offers art classes in figure-drawing and pottery wheel-turning. Book-signings take place regularly, and the store provides a venue for film showings by the local progressive film club, with topics ranging from war to global warming. The attached café with its tin ceiling and wide views of Capitol Street combines the best of the homey and quirky atmosphere of the bookstore.

Manager Michelle Kenstler, like her bookseller peers at other Appalachian bookstores, feels a strong sense of responsibility to provide the community with a cultural center, not just a retail outlet. "Being in Charleston and in the South allows us to offer a fusion of culture that I don't think happens elsewhere," she says. The bookstore and café are filled with edgy artwork by West Virginia artists. Musical events happen each week and are as important as book-signings. That blending of literature, art, and music helps the community stay vibrant and the store to diversify its retail offerings.

A native of Pennsylvania, Kenstler has been "pleasantly surprised" by the vitality and creativity of the whole region. The difficulties faced by Taylor Books are those faced by most independents, she believes, but she does admit that having a sparse population spread out through difficult-to-reach rural areas presents challenges. However, these same residents are passionate about their heritage and proud of their geography, which makes them supportive of a local business that they feel enriches the community.

Tucked away in the small mountain town of Sylva, North Carolina, City Lights Bookstore states its purpose on the store's website: "to share the literature of the Southern Appalachian region with the world, and the world of good books with our community." Owner Joyce Moore has felt a sense of responsibility to the local community of writers and readers since purchasing the store twenty-two years ago. A benefit of owning the bookstore, according to Moore, is that "we can support regional talent and never have a shortage of really good authors. It's not like we confine ourselves to having less because we narrow our focus."

City Lights participates in larger events through partnerships with Western Carolina University and

Malaprop's, Asheville, North Carolina. Photo courtesty Lori Tucker-Sullivan.

other groups. The university's recent literary festival included writers Russell Banks and Pat Conroy, and North Carolina poet laureate Kate Byer.

But Moore also takes satisfaction in the success of smaller events. A recent book-signing featured the authors of a book on Plott Hounds. The dogs were brought to the area by German settlers and bred to hunt bear. (Outside the bookstore's doors are the mountains of the Plott Balsam Range.) Authors of the book are descendants of the original breeders. The book was illustrated by a local artist, and the event included a visit by a large brown Plott Hound. Moore enjoys bringing this type of event and book to her customers. Being a smaller independent allows the store to support books that wouldn't get a second glance from a chain bookstore. Moore sees this as a responsibility but also feels a sense of pride in being part of the celebration of the region's rich cultural traditions.

Chapters Bookshop in Galax, Virginia, also fills a need for the people of a small town. Owner Sharon Ritchie recently purchased the 1904 building that houses her store and opened a doorway to her neighbor, a wine and gourmet food shop. Both stores are taking advantage of increased desires to shop locally and support homegrown businesses. The Literary Spirits Book and Wine Club is a monthly group that enjoys both retailers' offerings.

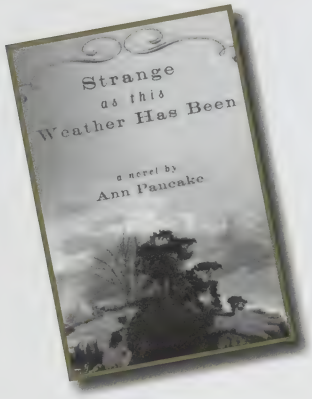
Although trends used to be slow in coming to rural Appalachia—it took several months for Ritchie to sell the first copy of Harry Potter ten years ago—the pace of change now happens more quickly. A celebration for the last Harry Potter book drew hundreds to the street in front of the store and included music and magicians. In the twelve years since she purchased the store, Ritchie has seen other changes among the customers she serves. "We have benefited from mass marketing of books on television shows like *Oprah* and *The Today Show.* Now people living anywhere can hear about a book."

In addition, she credits a strong accelerated reading program in the Virginia public schools for creating a group of young readers just within the past five years.

An influx of retirees with more disposable income has also helped Chapters Bookshop to grow, but Ritchie feels strongly that the store will continue to focus on its roots as a small-town Appalachian bookstore. Like other booksellers in the region, Ritchie has found her greatest success by being active in the community and nurturing cultural events, including the annual Leaf and String Festival that takes place each June.

The sense of responsibility to nurture the area's heritage motivates Appalachian booksellers to create places of discovery and adventure, where readers find the latest copy of the *New Yorker* next to a new essay by Silas House; where patrons talk of world issues over steaming coffee while keeping time to local bluegrass rhythms. Throughout Appalachia, dedicated booksellers feed the cultural richness of the area and thrive on it as well. ❖

Lori Tucker-Sullivan is originally from Detroit, Michigan, and now lives near Ann Arbor. While growing up, she spent several weeks each summer visiting family in East Tennessee and still returns there at least once each year. She holds a bachelor's degree in journalism and communication from the University of Michigan and for the past eight years has worked as executive director of the Independent Booksellers Consortium, Inc.



Strange as this Weather Has Been
By Ann Pancake
Shoemaker & Hoard
(now Counterpoint Press)
Berkley, California, 2007
$15.95 (paper), 360 pages

Ann Pancake's debut novel *Strange as this Weather Has Been* possesses beautiful prose, thumps with tension, has a palpable sense of place, and offers us characters that live and breathe and become part of our lives. Not only that: It is also the most important novel about Appalachia in recent memory. No wonder the novel won the 2008 Weatherford Award for fiction and poetry.

Strange as this Weather Has Been is about the Makepeace family, who live beneath a sprawling, monstrous mountaintop removal site that has already flooded their holler and threatens to do that—and more—again.

The story is told in alternating points of view, and we are most endeared to Lace, whom we first meet as a wild high school girl who wants nothing more than to get away from the holler. She goes off to college but can't stomach the homesickness. Once back home she finds herself pregnant by a young man with whom she is more in lust than in love. But the important thing to Lace is that she is home, roaming the mountains with her mother once again. Later, when she and her husband have to go to Raleigh to find work, she is miserable again. "Down there, you just can't get any grip on the land," Lace says. "No traction. No hold." So, she decides that she will go home and never leave the homeplace again. But it's not long before the Appalachia she knew explodes before her eyes.

Lace's daughter, Bant, has a voice that is even more compelling, managing to articulate not only what the mining practice does to the land, but also to the psyche of the people. All of the complexities and emotions of the issue have never been explored with as much insight and tenderness—in fiction or nonfiction—as when sixteen-year-old Bant sees the destruction on her beloved Cherryboy Mountain:

> "The first hurt I felt wasn't for myself. It was for Grandma. Many times I'd been in a car with her and seen a highwall . . . and how my grandma would flinch. I was scared to think what it would do to her to see this kind of violence on a piece of ground she loved. But after I felt for Grandma, it was like I no longer knew where I was. I all of a sudden got dizzy, so many times in my life I'd walked up this hollow, followed the creek, and back then, you couldn't see the top of anything. You were just in it, in the hollow, in the mountains, in the woods, up above you trees and vines and rock overhangs, and higher than that, a change in the light that let you know where the top should be. But then, finally, I did feel the hurt for myself. I understood. It was like they were knocking down whatever it is inside of you that holds you up."

There is also Bant's father, Jimmy Make, and her brothers: sensitive, compassionate Dane and heckling Corey (the only voice upon whose every word I didn't hang), as well as a beautiful chapter from the point of view of Lace's uncle, Mogey, and, best of all, a harrowing, long piece through the eyes of Avery, who survived the 1972 Buffalo Creek Disaster. This thirty-three-page-long chapter is an absolute tour de force that describes the disaster in amazing, emotional, and unforgettable detail. It is among the most haunting passages of literature that I have ever had the fortune to read. Avery's tale is a warning on how easily it would be for another disaster to occur, but it also makes clear all the ways that environmental destruction obliterates a place. Not only its land, but also its culture, its identity, its pride, its very being.

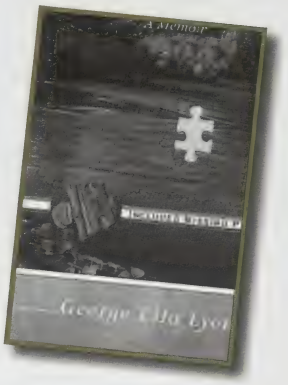
Ann Pancake has crafted a novel of rare beauty, a book so important in subject matter that it would be easy to overlook the perfection of its prose, which is so rhythmic and precise that I occasionally had to pull myself away from it to take a breath and reread the line with awe. No Appalachian literature collection is complete without this book. In fact, no reader's bookshelf should be without it. *Strange as this Weather Has Been* fairly thrums with real, raw emotion and beautiful writing. ❖

Silas House, author of *Clay's Quilt, A Parchment of Leaves,* and *The Coal Tattoo,* is writer-in-residence at Lincoln Memorial University. He won the 2008 Appalachian Studies Association's Helen M. Lewis Community Service Award for his work as an advocate against mountaintop removal mining.

Don't You Remember? A Memoir

By George Ella Lyon

MotesBooks
Louisville, Kentucky, 2007
$17.00 (paper), 216 pages



On a family trip, from the back seat of her parents' car, five-year-old George Ella Lyon stopped singing and began navigating her family through Bath, New York, a place they'd never been. Her firsthand descriptions of a factory, an underpass, a park, and other scenes exactly as the family would find them up ahead were amusing until they could no longer pass for coincidence. When asked how, young Lyon simply said, "I used to teach school here." Her mother became particularly spooked when they stopped to eat and her young daughter warned her not to fall down stairs she shouldn't have known existed. They drove straight back to Harlan County, Kentucky, and never spoke of it until years later when her brother asked her, "Don't you remember?" She didn't at first.

But years of strange happenings tugged at a thread of truth that threatened to unravel her otherwise neatly wrapped life until she could no longer ignore it. "If strangeness was going to keep coming after me," Lyon writes, "I would turn around and face it. More than that, I would go toward it."

Lyon's memoir, *Don't You Remember?*, is a one-afternoon read but one that will leave the reader thinking for many afternoons to come. She not only takes us on the adventure, but with vulnerability and honesty she lets us see the fear and doubt that shrouded her investigation. "I was scared to go back to Bath . . . .Was I saying to the spirit world, 'Here I am. Come and get me?'"

It took nearly three decades before Lyon would return to Bath to explore what or who had spoken through her. Once again she ex-

perienced a "taken over" feeling: "I just felt sorrow and loss welling up, huge and unstoppable. . . . I couldn't describe the total strangeness of being overtaken with feeling and not having a clue as to what it was about."

Having researched plenty of characters for her novels, she eventually realized that without a name or a date to look up, she had nowhere to turn unless she was willing to consider past-life regression therapy. She'd never believed in past lives or knew anybody who did. "I didn't understand how writing worked either," she explains. "I made my life from uncertainty." She decided to trust herself and the process and found a past life regression therapist. "What did I have to lose? Dignity, sanity, money, my concept of myself as someone too-what? Intelligent? Christian? Educated? Skeptical?—too something to fall for such a deluded idea."

She jumped in with both feet, physically traveling from Bath, New York, to Wales, following footprints left by another lifetime, clues she spoke herself while under hypnosis, under the name of Jane Grace. *Don't You Remember?* is the story of what she found and what she didn't.

As the cover suggests, Lyon's puzzle includes missing pieces. The events of this intriguing saga are inexplicable by ordinary means, and though we are often left with more questions than answers, there is a sense of spiritual reverence we are compelled to explore. "We are called, daily, to our deepest selves," Lyon concludes. "Jane, whoever and however she is, called me, and I am thankful that I had the chance to answer."

This story, which moves elegantly back and forth between two women's lives as they interact even across continents and time, transcends the search for a past life incarnation. While *Don't You Remember?* explores that subject with the delicate balance of belief and non-belief, it gives us permission not to have all the answers. For a writer, it is a lesson in research and storytelling. For others, it could just as easily be about any woman of the same age searching for her own voice lost in the workplace, in the family, or sitting in the pew of her church.

Lyon observes: "If you abandon or ridicule your voiceplace, you forfeit a deep spiritual connection." Her gentle handling of Jane's story reminds us of the importance of honoring our own voice and trusting our intuition. ❖

Donna McClanahan is the most recent recipient of the Sue Ellen Hudson Excellence in Writing Award for fiction. Her work is forthcoming in *Kudzu*.

Her Secret Dream
By Rita Sims Quillen
Wind Publications
Nicholasville, Kentucky, 2007
$15.00 (paper) 89 pages

In his essay, "Englands of the Mind," Irish poet Seamus Heaney examines the effect of dialect upon creative work. He quotes Ted Hughes: ". . . it's your childhood self there inside the dialect and that is possibly your real self or the core of it. . . ." Heaney goes on to say, "In other words . . . the original grain of his speech is a chip off the old block and that . . . his work need not be a new planting but a new bud on an old bough."

So it is with Rita Quillen's book, *Her Secret Dream*. The grain of Quillen's speech is kept alive in the landscape of her southwest Virginia home. The author speaks with a firm grasp on the natural world and her

place in it. A world where "The sad but noble scene is not the whole story" ("The Good Life") and " . . . the wild / trusts and believes in the good / Keeps faith / does not surrender" ("Chimney Swift").

The book is arranged in three sections: Her Secret Dream, Counting the Sums, and October Dusk. Her Secret Dream contains Quillen's contemporary work. The latter are selections from the poet's early books. *Counting the Sums* appeared in 1995, and *October Dusk* came out in a limited press run in 1987. Wind Publications has done us a service in bringing these poems to our attention and a wider circulation.

These are the poems of a young wife and mother, looking forward, reaching out like ripples on a still pond. The poet explores beginnings and endings, where daughter becomes mother to her children and to her own mother. In the poem "Nexus," the author waits for her daughter to "See lives / Lasting only a few days / or a season: A flicker of connection." In "Sunday School Lesson," the author speaks of God with her son and kens ". . . how each of my children / resembles someone long dead / as if God had run out of new faces / and started over."

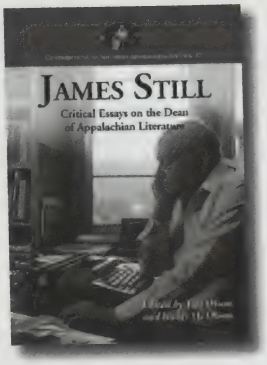
The poems in Counting the Sums examine full adulthood, the period when the young have become the "adults in charge." Here, the poet looks at despair and loss through the perspective of women: "We don't sell our souls / or just lose them / The way men do / We usually give them away. / How did our mothers manage?" ("Prayer of the Mad Farmer's Wife"), and "You must comfort yourself / Your daughter will do her own weeping" ("On July 18, 1966").

In the section entitled Her Secret Dream, "My children are strong / Beautiful, confident, defiant / But plain blind ignorant - / Life has not paid them a visit yet" ("Passing Suite"). Life has paid the poet a visit, though. These poems form a series of elegies for youth, friends, and family now gone. In "Back When I Wrote Poems," the poet observes: "I was younger, stronger, quicker then / With beautiful white wings of words. . . .Today when I mounted the current / I had to fight for altitude."

The poet returns to the natural world in four poems centered on trees. Three regard childhood and youth. The fourth makes plain that the sheltering trees of youth and childhood give way in the cycle of creation, mortality certain and sudden. The poems form, then, not ripples but a spiral that returns and retouches the subject matter. The poems become a mandala, a meditation, a prayer, indeed a nexus.

Her Secret Dream resonates with the inner freedom and dialect of childhood and gives it voice, most certainly "new buds on old boughs." Quillen's Appalachia is rendered clear-eyed, unsentimental, unblinking, and distinctly feminine. Anyone who loves or wants to understand Appalachia will find it necessary reading. ❖

A. Jane Hicks is a widely published poet, teacher, and quilt artist. Her book of poetry, *Blood & Bone Remember* (2005), won the 2006 Appalachian Book of the Year Award in Poetry. Her quilt art was featured in a special edition of *Blue Ridge Country* magazine.



James Still: Critical Essays on the Dean of Appalachian Literature

Edited by Ted Olson and Kathy H. Olson

McFarland and Company
Jefferson, North Carolina, 2007
$35.00 (paperback), 245 pages

Carol Boggess describes James Still as a writer who has "intrigued people for over 60 years, sometimes eliciting more comment than his writings." Editors Ted Olson and Kathy H. Olson seek to illuminate both the man and his literature in *James Still: Critical Essays on the Dean of Appalachian Literature*. This "is the first book-length collection of scholarly essays" on Still with many "hard to find today," as Ted Olson says in his Introduction, where he clearly delineates what has been chosen for inclusion. Any reader, whether an undergraduate, a casual reader, or a knowledgeable scholar of Appalachian studies, is sure to find a clear picture of Still and a great sense of Still's connection to the American literary canon.

This collection begs the reader to ignore its table of contents, despite its six clearly-labeled chapters, and read the essays through start to finish, rather like a novel. For example, if a reader is looking for insight into Still's most famous work, examining only the four essays in the *River of Earth* section means missing H. R. Stoneback's essay on agrarianism that sets up the river as a pervasive Still metaphor; Carol Boggess's "Journey of Childhood"; the overviews of Still offered by Don Cadle and Fred Chappell; or Jim Wayne Miller's discussion of Still's use of language in "Jim Dandy." The five essays in the section on Still's poetry offer detailed and thoughtful explications of poems, but elsewhere Chris Green's essay outlining the theory of Still's "poetics" provides a fundamental framework for appreciation. Briefer prose pieces highlighted in the collection's short story section, such as "The Nest," "Mrs. Razor," and "I Love My Rooster," also receive sensitive discussion in other essays.

All the usual biographical facts of Still's life are referenced: his decision to come to Lincoln Memorial University and later Vanderbilt; his student work as a janitor in the library that gave him great access to books; his relationships with college friends Jesse Stuart and Don West; his return to Knott County for varying reasons; and his role as librarian and "bookmobile on foot." If readers never had the opportunity to meet Still, they can still admire a writer who "preferred the company of children [and] animals," as Hal Crowther mentions, or who admitted to wearing a "Phi Beta Kappa key [. . .] out of sight," as Jim Wayne Miller reports.

These biographical facts, however, are always set in the context of literary analysis. Many literary themes are addressed: mountains as well as rivers as metaphor, home and family, the role of children, journeying versus nesting, and reinterpretations of that old American value of self-reliance.

Most interesting is what scholars have to say of Still's use of narration, the apparent absence of a controlling voice to guide the reader. What Chris Green calls Still's "quiet witness," both as a person and as a crafter of literature, shows affinities with the New Critics at Vanderbilt and their emphasis on the power of the text apart from any creator. Jim Wayne Miller comments on Still's avoidance of the "perpendicular pronoun" *I* so that "the author is nowhere to be discovered. The story is itself." Thus, the burden—or pleasure—falls on the reader to "meet me halfway, not expect me to do the whole job," as Randolph Paul Runyon recalls Still saying in an interview.

James Still: Critical Essays on the Dean of Appalachian Literature provides such a range of scholarly comment and analysis that a reader can easily meet Still "halfway" and see

this urbane man of Appalachia as a key figure of twentieth-century American literature within the larger traditions of realism, modernism, and post-modernism. Both the man and his varied literature are clarified by this latest contribution of literary scholarship. ❖

Kathy Griffith Fish has been teaching English at the University of the Cumberlands in Kentucky for twenty-four years. She teaches *River of Earth* to nontraditional students in Cumberlands' PACE program.

Kinfolks: Falling off the Family Tree: The Search for My Melungeon Ancestors

By Lisa Alther

Arcade Publishing
New York, New York, 2007
$25.00 (hardcover), 241 pages

A friend once told me of a conversation with her sister-in-law about the contested origins of Melungeons and the recent re-emergence of a Melungeon identity. Unfazed by the various historical claims, her sister-in-law shrugged and summed it up with the essential yet dismissive question: "Well, aren't we all a mixture?" Lisa Alther comes to the same conclusion, more or less.

This book is, as they say, a breezy romp through the Melungeon project, the exploration of the historical origins of a group of mixed-race, mixed-ethnicity people who live in Appalachia and who are marked as "Melungeon." *Kinfolks* is also part memoir and a reflective genealogy of Alther's own family roots.

Each narrative drives the other as Alther tells stories about growing up in Kingsport, Tennessee, the daughter and granddaughter of physicians, with a grandmother fixated on transforming her own mountain beginnings to a history more Tidewater (epitomized by her membership in Kingsport's "Virginia Club"). A collective silence about Alther's paternal grandparents' childhood histories, a lack of connection to her southwest Virginia kin, and the mythic yet demeaning images of Melungeons handed down to her are essential to the structure and content of this book. Alther also discovered Brent Kennedy's *The Melungeons: The Resurrection of a Proud People* (Mercer University Press, 1994), generally considered to be the book that put the subject into a wider public consciousness while spawning a host of other books about Melungeons. When Alther realized that Kennedy, who identifies as Melungeon, was her cousin, she was hooked.

Alther's instincts as a researcher are good. Constitutionally a skeptic, she asks: "Were you Melungeon only if your neighbors thought of you as such?" Setting up the identity of "Melungeon" as an historical and social construct allows her to delve into various origin theories without being too invested in the outcome, unlike much of the literature on Melungeons. She explores three explanations: that Melungeons are descendants of sixteenth-century parties of Spanish explorers, such as DeSoto, who mixed with Indians as they slashed their way from Florida northward and westward into what is now western North Carolina and East Tennessee; that they are the descendants of Portuguese sailors and slaves who shipwrecked in the late 1500s and whose progeny continued to mix with others in America and moved westward into the Appalachian mountains to avoid being racially marked as black; and, finally, that they are the offspring of the Lost Colony sur-

vivors partially composed of enslaved Turks, Moors, Africans, and South American Indians who were dumped by English privateer Sir Francis Drake on Roanoke Island in 1585.

In the end, Alther, like so many other Melungeon researchers, turns to biological relations to explain historical and social ones. A certain level of suspense is maintained in the narrative of *Kinfolks,* resting on the results of a two-year DNA study of self-identified Melungeons conducted by University of Virginia College at Wise geneticist Kevin Jones. Announced at a Melungeon conference, Jones's findings revealed that "no one specific DNA pattern [can be] associated with the tested Melungeons."

The study found that Melungeons' DNA ties them to East Indians, Native Americans, Turks, Arabs, sub-Saharan Africans, and Europeans. Alther concludes by asking and then answering her own question: "So what does this hodgepodge make us, in addition to Melungeons? It makes us Americans for one thing. . . . But America has never really been a melting pot, in any case. It's actually a stir-fry. Like picky children, each generation selects only the vegetables it deems palatable. My grandmother Reed speared the Tidewater ones and my great-grandmother Pealer the Mayflower ones. But the other heritages were still there, however repressed or mangled, lending their scents and flavors to the entire skillet."

But "heritage" is not genetic. History is not constituted by DNA but rather by political economies, cultural processes, social relations, and lived experiences. While it is interesting to contemplate the biological origins of those called "Melungeon," more important questions remain unasked and unexamined. In addition to physical characteristics, genetic medical conditions, and common surnames—the most touted signifiers of Melungeon-ness—we have stories passed down about discrimination, isolation, and exclusion suffered by Melungeons. But so far, no researcher has done the work of showing how these racialized practices worked across space and time.

In her memoir, Lisa Alther seems to conclude, like my friend's sister-in-law, that Melungeon-ness is not so much an exception but a piece of a story that is quintessentially American. ❖

Kate Black is the curator of the University of Kentucky Libraries' Appalachian Collection and is on the faculty of the Appalachian Studies Program there.

BOOKS IN BRIEF

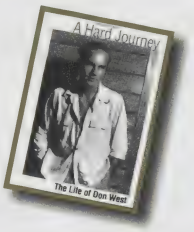
"Urbane" is variously defined as "polite, refined, and elegant in manner." In terms of literature, sophisticated readers don't often care much about the polite part, but we demand an elegant and refined written expression. Here are a few good books that meet our definition and that we're recommending for reading:

After Appalachia, poems by Judy Loest (Finishing Line, 2007). A native of Snowflake, Virginia, Loest is well known in Knoxville, Tennessee, writing circles as a poet and as editor of *Knoxville Bound*, a literary anthology about that town.

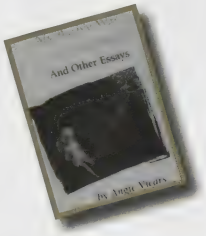
Bringing Down the Mountains: The Impact of Mountaintop Removal on Southern West Virginia Communities, by Shirley Stewart Burns (West Virginia U. Press, 2007). One of only a handful of books documenting the current decimation of mountaintops in Appalachia, Burns' study is one of the most conversational and best educational resources on the topic.

Calling Home, a novel by Janna McMahan (Kensington, 2008). This debut novel by the Kentucky native is a heartbreaking family story set in rural Kentucky. Lee Smith praises it as both "gritty" and "down-home."

From Whence, poems by Michael Chitwood (LSU Press, 2007). Chitwood's seventh collection of poetry coincides with his recent honor as the featured author at the annual literary festival at Emory & Henry, Chitwood's alma mater.



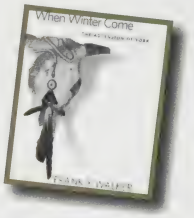
A Hard Journey: The Life of Don West, by James J. Lorence (U. of Illinois Press, 2007). Winner of the 2008 Weatherford Award for nonfiction, this is the first comprehensive biography of Appalachia's pioneering activist-poet Don West.



My Barbie Was an Amputee and Other Essays, by Angie Vicars (Celtic Cat, 2006). A journalist and screenwriter, Vicars usurps the mundane through insight, whimsy, and, most of all, laugh-out-loud, self-deprecating humor.

The Night I Freed John Brown, a novel by John Michael Cummings (Philomel/Penguin, 2008). A Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, native and short story writer, Cummings sets this suspenseful debut novel for young readers is set in his historic hometown.

Slow Children Playing, poems by Connie Jordan Green (Finishing Line, 2007). Known for her prize-winning novels for young adults, (*Emmy, The War at Home)* Green has also won prizes for her previously uncollected poems.



When Winter Come: The Ascension of York, poems by Frank X Walker (U. Press of Kentucky, 2008). This is Walker's sequel to his award-winning *Buffalo Dance: The Journey of York,* historical poems about the slave of William Clark who took part in the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

Whistlin' and Crowin' Women of Appalachia: Literacy Practices Since College, by Katherine Kelleher Sohn (Southern Illinois U. Press, 2006). Sohn's case study of eight rural, working-class Appalachian women follows their achievements as college graduates and contributing members of their communities. ❖

A LEADER IN TECHNO-ORGANIC FOOD

By FRED SAUCEMAN

As a high-school student in Wise, Virginia, Sean Brock hated chemistry.

"I only began to like it when I was able to eat it," says the young executive chef at McCrady's Restaurant in Charleston, South Carolina.

Sean's work with invert sugars and emulsifiers is winning praise nationwide. One of the country's most respected food chemists, Shirley Corriher, calls him "a resourceful chef with the sensibility and creativity to apply chemistry to achieve intense taste."

Corriher, a Vanderbilt University graduate, is the author of *Cookwise: The Secrets of Cooking Revealed*, a book that won a James Beard Foundation award for its down-to-earth explanations of kitchen chemistry.

"He's such a dedicated, hard-working, and really resourceful chef," Shirley told me. "I just go crazy reading his menu. And his plain old comfort food is great, too."

At age ten, Sean was cooking Sunday dinner for his family in Wise. He graduated from Johnson & Wales in Charleston and before long was named Nashville's best chef by the *Nashville Scene* food critic for his work at The Capitol Grille downtown.

He took over the kitchen at McCrady's in Charleston in April of 2006. The restaurant is steeped in tradition. In 1791 a dinner party was held in its Longroom in honor of George Washington during his Southern tour.

But Sean Brock didn't let the genteel surroundings confine him.

"He is on the vanguard of the molecular cuisine movement," says John T. Edge, director of the Southern Foodways Alliance at the University of Mississippi.

I first met Sean Brock during the Nashville Tomato Festival, over a reinterpretation of the BLT, one to which he'd added a slab of catfish, on a bed of heirloom tomatoes.

"Almost a year and a half later, I still get calls for the bacon Sean put on that sandwich," says Allan Benton, owner of Benton's Smoky Mountain Country Hams in Madisonville, Tennessee.

Sauté pan and spatula are Sean's kitchen accoutrements. But so, too, are a Styrofoam cooler filled with liquid nitrogen and a cotton candy machine.

As the minus 273-degree Celsius liquid nitrogen in the cooler fogs the kitchen, Sean reaches for three plastic squeeze bottles. From one streams liquefied Wonder Bread. From another, thinned down Welch's grape jelly. From a third, peanut butter. The result is his playful take on the flavors of the peanut butter and jelly sandwich, scooped out of the cooler in the form of shopping mall-style Dippin' Dots.

"I think a sense of humor is important in the kitchen," Sean says. "I want to figure out how to make Cheetos taste like Allan Benton's bacon."

In 2007, the Chinese Year of the Pig, he infused cotton candy with the flavor of country ham.

"I've been experimenting with fat-based cotton candy," Sean says. "Fat is a wonderful thing."

Versions of cotton candy with bacon, roasted chicken fat, olive oil, and truffle oil are now in his techno-organic repertoire.

Next up? An attempt to make breath strips taste like foie gras.❖

Sean Brock squeezes liquefied Wonder Bread and thinned-down grape jelly to form a Dippin' Dots version of a PB&J sandwich. Photo courtesy Fred Sauceman.

Fred Sauceman's book series *The Place Setting: Timeless Tastes of the Mountain South—from Bright Hope to Frog Level* is published by Mercer University Press in Macon, Georgia.

CHIVALROUS GRITS

By BILL ADDISON

The first bite delivers a gentle surge of corn, familiar yet ardent. I can pick up the barely perceptible trace of nutty parmesan in the second mouthful. The texture is stout but also silkier than expected. It tastes nothing like the instant goop I vigorously sidestepped as a kid. The richness of the dish seems to actually come from the quality and depth of the main ingredient. Of course, a swipe through lemony butter sauce augmented by the salty nip of country ham doesn't hurt, either.

This is Frank Stitt's chivalrous way with grits—and so many other foods.

Stitt's tale of culinary ascension is prototypical for his generation of pioneering chefs: An Alabama native, Stitt set off for Berkeley, California, to study philosophy in the '70s. His love for food led him to the rebelliously innovative Chez Panisse, where Alice Waters would ultimately change the course of American cooking. With introductions arranged by Waters and her chef, Jeremiah Tower, Stitt traveled to France. There, his ideas about true integrity toward food and wine began to percolate.

He came home to Alabama after a peripatetic spell and opened Highlands Bar & Grill in Birmingham in 1982. In its October 2001 ranking of the best fifty restaurants in the country, *Gourmet* magazine ranked Stitt's accessibly elegant restaurant number five on the list, right after Wolfgang Puck's Spago in Beverly Hills.

And after the day we've had, we're in need of some accessible elegance.

The hotel we booked near Stitt's restaurant in Birmingham's Five Points neighborhood tells us they don't have room for us. The manager on duty sends us halfway across the city to another hotel. Nice room, but why is it so stuffy in here? Turns out the air conditioner is on the fritz. We take cold showers, iron our good clothes, and head back to Five Points, determined not to be grumpy.

It isn't difficult. The moment you walk from the tree-lined street into Highlands' bar, you're doused in viscous, caramel light that flatters even the ill-tempered. We drink Lillet Blanc, a French aperitif that fluently adapts to Southern gentility, and gaze at oversized vintage French posters. The customers are noticeably relaxed. People can be who they want to be at Highlands.

I watch Stitt chatting with a regular across the room. With his straight back and shocks of distinguished gray in otherwise brown hair, he has the look of a gentleman farmer. You can tell he possesses both warmth and staunch resolve.

The importance of superior, locally sourced ingredients has only increased for Stitt since Highlands opened. I know as I eat his sweetbread gratin that the asparagus and morel mushrooms suspended in *svelte velouté* didn't come from halfway around the world. A bed of crushed, brightly verdant sweet peas under grilled rabbit tastes like something out of a neighbor's garden—which it probably is.

Much of the food at Highlands has a French lilt, but you can easily identify the homegrown inspiration for pork cheeks and belly in ham hock broth, or the grilled quail served with bacon, spoonbread, and ramps.

And it's such a rare pleasure to enjoy honestly ripe, in-season strawberries for dessert, especially when they've been prepared three wholly satisfying ways: churned into a milkshake, folded into a jam-laced crepe, and sliced raw, slicked with boozy sabayon.

Despite our muggy hotel room, we sleep very well that night. ❖

Reprinted with permission from *Creative Loafing*, Atlanta's alternative news weekly at http://atlanta.creativeloafing.com

Bill Addison is restaurant critic for the *Dallas Morning News*.

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

By MICHAEL CHITWOOD

I was the one who got caught that day
to tell Grandmother what I had learned in school.

The others escaped into the yard,
and the woods beyond, tagging, being *it.*

And so I said "Geography,"
and began to spell.

"Now let me tell you," the old lady interrupted
as she always did.

That was history as far as I was concerned,
correcting, sure, better than today.

"Here's how we did it.
George Eliot's oldest girl rode a pony home yesterday."

Once again she had nothing to do with the world.
A girl on a pony? No one rode now.

Where was the girl coming from,
plodding back home on a short, dusty horse?

I saw that her feet nearly drug
and her dress bunched on the saddle.

Her long bare legs were dazzlingly white
and marked with red briar scratches.

It was a road I knew, but unpaved,
with fewer houses in sight.

Woodsmoke trickled from chimneys
into the afternoon sky. A wheat thresher hummed.

People were stronger or they lay in beds,
coughing blood into handmade handkerchiefs.

Some dogs came out to sniff the pony
and the girl said, "Git."

She reminded herself to say "Get."
She would leave this place and not take it

with her in her speech.
What she wanted was elsewhere and otherwise.

"There, isn't that easier?" the old lady asked.
And I said "Yes ma'am" and left, relieved of learning.

I went out into that same
changed geography where the girl grew old

and did not leave but married and settled
and still wondered if it should have been otherwise.

Born and raised in the hills of the Virginia Blue Ridge, Michael Chitwood is a freelance writer and a visiting lecturer at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His poetry and fiction have appeared in *Poetry, The New Republic, Threepenny Review, Virginia Quarterly Review, The Georgia Review,* and numerous other journals. Six collections of poetry and two essay collections have been published, with *Gospel Road Going* being awarded the 2003 Roanoke-Chowan Prize for Poetry.

Breaking Beans Kingsport TN, 2004
Photo courtesy Shawne Brown from the *"Exegesis"* series of photographs.
See more of Mr. Brown's work at: students.etsu.edu/zcsb21/

This issue of *Now & Then* makes the case that there need be no tension between the words "urbane" and Appalachia. Our friend Charles Daniel had the same idea with this cartoon.

Cartoon courtesy Charles Daniel, Knoxville News-Sentinel.

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